

ENGAGING ANCIENT
MAYA SCULPTURE
AT PIEDRAS NEGRAS,
GUATEMALA

MEGAN E. O'NEIL

***Engaging Ancient Maya Sculpture
at Piedras Negras, Guatemala***





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Megan E. O'Neil

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On the title page: Architectural reconstruction of Piedras Negras Structure K-5-1st.
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To the Maya people of Guatemala, past and present

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Preface and Acknowledgments

The seeds for this project were planted in 2000 while I was on site with the Piedras Negras Archaeological Project, directed by Stephen Houston, then of Brigham Young University, now at Brown University, and Héctor Escobedo Ayala of the Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, recently the Minister of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Guatemala. I had been inspired by Tatiana Proskouriakoff's work on Piedras Negras sculpture and her brilliant demonstration that Maya sculptures recorded history—one of the major breakthroughs in the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic writing. But as I moved through the spaces of this Maya city and experienced its topography, I became more and more fascinated by the relation of the site's buildings to the landscape and by the palpable presence of the sculptured monuments that once filled the city.

I did not start out to write a book on the sculpture of Piedras Negras, though. My dissertation examined how the Classic period Maya interacted with their past, exploring in particular how they created narrations on monumental stone sculptures and manipulated older sculptures as a means of making contact with ancestors and framing the past. A chapter in my dissertation dealt with the interrelation of Piedras Negras Panels 2 and 3 and the buried Panel 12 at Structure O-13 (revisited in chapter 4 of this book). The burial of Panel 12 was especially interesting in the context of Classic period Maya conceptions of history and the forging of connections between past and present through textual narrations, images, and objects.

The question of when, where, and how the Classic period Maya buried sculptures, and other ways they treated sculptures after they were made, developed into the project for another book (in progress) on the lives of ancient Maya sculptures, which explores how the Classic period Maya used and transformed stone sculptures over time at multiple sites. I focus, for example, on sculptures that were buried, burned, or moved to new locations. And I conclude that it was the engagement with sculptures in ceremonial contexts that was privileged—even if it led to the damage or destruction of carvings or to the placement of sculptures in contexts that precluded their visibility.

But Piedras Negras, the focus of the current book, offers a different set of circumstances. Here, buried and reset sculptures are few. For more than seven generations, the rulers of this polity left most of their stone monuments where they were initially dedicated—in contrast to the reset and buried monuments that had been my focus. The monuments that were *not* moved became an important counter to those that were

reset or buried and inspired me to ask questions about how these sculptures still in place changed over time, even when their physical context essentially remained the same. The Piedras Negras sculptures offer an especially fruitful case for this pursuit because of the relationships their ancient makers created among them.

At the same time, the conclusions of that other study of relocated, reused, or buried sculptures led me to reconsider the Piedras Negras case and to focus more on Maya engagement with the sculptures as both physical objects and vital entities, particularly in ceremonial contexts, a primary theme of the current book. Their visibility, the images they portray, and the texts they narrate are important, but so is an understanding of how these carvings relate to the objects' physical forms, how they may have inspired interaction and movement, and how they articulated with ancient Maya religion and ceremony and with arenas of power and its display. My analyses of narratives and other pictorial and textual expressions are therefore placed in tension with explorations of the medium and materiality of Maya sculpture, as well as of human engagement with and experience of them.

Exploring how people interact with these monuments is thus a fundamental theme in my analysis of the Piedras Negras sculptures, but this inquiry does not end in the ninth century, when the site was abandoned. In this book, I also investigate the monuments' modern histories, which are essential parts of their life histories—or afterlives—because most of them were destroyed in the 1960s. My book attempts to recover what was lost by their destruction, to understand how they were transformed when relocated in the twentieth century, and to consider how people engage with them in new ways in changed contexts.

As an undergraduate student of Mary Miller and Michael Coe at Yale College, I studied little about the ancient Maya and focused instead on the art, architecture, and offering practices of the Mexica of Central Mexico. However, I was exposed just enough to the ancient Maya civilization that I chose to pursue graduate study on the Maya. I credit Professors Miller and Coe for revealing the enormous potential for research in pre-Columbian studies and for encouraging me to pursue it. Their brilliant minds, vivid stories, and palpable passion for pre-Columbian studies were inspirational, and their enthusiasm for the discovery and sharing of knowledge was contagious.

Later, as a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin, I was introduced by the late Linda Schele, in the last year of her life, to the excitement of the world of Maya hieroglyphs. I learned of the roles she and others played in the extraordinary history of the decipherment of this ancient writing system and was privileged to wade into its complexities with her as my guide and inspiration. Although I knew her for less than a year, I learned a lifetime of knowledge in that year. After Austin, I returned to Yale to study again with Mary Miller, who has been a wonderful and dedicated mentor and colleague.

Other professors I must thank are Rolena Adorno, Marcello Canuto, Nikolai Grube, and Christopher Wood for the knowledge, inspiration, and support they shared with me when I was in graduate school, and from whom I continue to learn. A discussion many years ago with Alexander Nemerov of Yale University, in which he pushed me to strive to get to the heart of what these sculptures do—and not just what they say—continually shapes the questions I ask.

Special thanks are due to Stephen Houston and Héctor Escobedo Ayala for allowing me to participate in the project at Piedras Negras in 2000 and for their subsequent generosity in sharing data and ideas. Steve walked me through the site on my first day and made the buildings come alive, and since that time, he has been an extraordinary mentor from whom I have learned a great deal about epigraphy, archaeology, and anthropology. I am grateful for the friendship of Jessica and Mark Child, James Fitzsimmons, Charles Golden, Heather Hurst, and Sarah Jackson, field companions many years ago at Piedras Negras. Furthermore, I am indebted to the many archaeologists whose excavation notes and data I use in my research, especially J. Alden Mason and Linton Satterthwaite (then of the Penn Museum), who worked at Piedras Negras in the 1930s, and the members of the more recent Piedras Negras Archaeological Project.

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Some of the research and initial arguments for chapter 4 appeared in my dissertation submitted for the PhD degree in the History of Art Department at Yale University. I presented some of the research and initial arguments for chapters 2 and 3 at the 2007 Association of Latin American Art Triennial Conference at the Institute of Fine Arts in New York City, and for chapter 4 at the 2009 "Capturing the Moment: Visual Evidence and Eyewitnessing" conference, organized by Vanessa Schwartz of the University of Southern California and Lynn Hunt of UCLA. The paper for the latter conference was subsequently published in the *Journal of Visual Culture* in December 2010. The insightful questions and feedback from colleagues at these conferences were helpful in the further development of my ideas.

I want to thank the various institutions that supported the research and writing of this book and my dissertation, from which parts of this book arose. They include Yale University, the Josef Albers Fund at Yale, the Institute of International Education and the Fulbright program, Dumbarton Oaks, the University of Southern California (USC), the J. Paul Getty Foundation, and the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA) at the National Gallery of Art, as well as the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which provided the financial support for my CASVA fellowship. Special thanks are owed to the directors and staff at the institutions where I was a research fellow in residence, including Jeffrey Quilter and Joanne Pillsbury, former directors of Pre-Columbian Studies at Dumbarton Oaks; Elizabeth Cropper, Peter Lukehart, and Therese O'Malley, the deans at CASVA; and Carmen Bambach,

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Notes on Language, Spelling, and Calendar Conventions

Direct translations of Maya hieroglyphs are in bold, with logographs (signs standing for words) in capital letters and syllables in lowercase letters. Transliterations of hieroglyphs are italicized. In the transcription of Maya words, the letter *x* is pronounced “sh.” In some transcriptions, *š* is used for the same sound. The letter *j* is pronounced like a hard “h” or the Spanish *jota*. The adjective “Maya” is used here, as opposed to “Mayan,” unless I am quoting from a source that uses the latter form.

The position of a hieroglyph within a sculpture’s text is shown with a letter and a number; letters correspond to columns, and numbers correspond to rows, such that each hieroglyph will have a coordinate comprising a letter and a number. Correlations of Maya dates with the Christian calendar use the Modified GMT (Goodman-Martínez-Thompson) correlation constant of 584285 (GMT + 2) and are given in the Julian calendar (see Martin and Grube 2008:13). Most of the dates of Piedras Negras sculptures mentioned in this book are from Houston, Escobedo, and Webster (2008).

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Introduction

Engaging Ancient Maya Sculpture

The ancient Maya city of Piedras Negras, located on the Usumacinta River in Guatemala's Department of the Petén, is a city now shrouded in jungle (map P.1, plate 1). It flourished between the sixth and ninth centuries CE, when a series of sacred kings—with titles of *k'uhul ajaw* (sacred lord) and *k'in ajaw* (sun lord)—ruled the polity, the name of which was Yokib (Stuart and Houston 1994:31) (fig. I.1). In addition to constructing a city of towering temples, expansive plazas, and causeways linking architectural groups nestled in the hilly topography along the Usumacinta River, these *k'uhul ajaw* erected monumental stone sculptures—including stelae, altars, and panels—carved with images of rulers accompanied by family members, advisers, captives, ancestors, and deities, as well as with hieroglyphic texts.

These monuments were one of the polity's important forms of political, spiritual, and material expression. They functioned as crucial displays of authority for the *k'uhul ajaw*. They were also sacred stones that may have held the vital essence of the divine rulers (Stuart 1996), and they remained as visible and material loci for reverence and memory of those rulers after they died. In addition, these stones commemorated time. Their dedications during calendar-period endings would have taken place amid grand festivities; during these rites, people would have activated the monuments by engaging with them, which may have involved unwrapping them, processing around them, and reciting their texts. Finally, they were an integral part of the city's buildings and other architectural forms.

Yet these sculptures and their physical contexts have been disturbed, and the site now is mostly stripped of its monuments. The Maya destroyed some of the sculptures in the ninth century, and the tropical environment wreaked havoc on many others after the polity's subsequent demise. By the time Austrian explorer Teobert Maler (1901) photographed the monuments in the 1890s, whole sculpted surfaces had eroded, their bright colors had faded, and the inserted inlays of shell, obsidian, and jade had long fallen off the sculptures. Several decades later, more than a dozen monuments were moved to museums in Guatemala and the United States (Mason 1935). Six decades after that, more than fourteen of the remaining stelae were cut to pieces by looters and taken from the site. The Piedras Negras sculptures, mostly in fragments bearing only a ruler's face or body, a captive, or hieroglyphs, are now scattered across the globe in museums and private collections (Coggins 1969; J. Luján

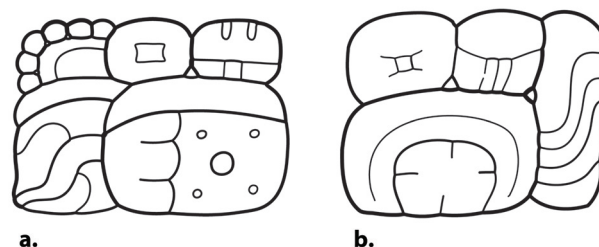


Figure I.1. Ruler titles at Piedras Negras. a. *k'uhul yokib ajaw* (holy lord of Yokib, or sacred entrance lord). Drawing by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT, after John Montgomery. b. *k'in ajaw* (sun lord), from Piedras Negras Stela 25. Drawing by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT, after Barbara Page.

Muñoz 1966; Mayer 1980:9–11; Stuart and Graham 2003; see also the epilogue). At Piedras Negras today, little is visible of the Yokib polity's magnificent monumental sculptures.

This book focuses on the stone monuments installed at Piedras Negras during the Late Classic period (seventh to ninth centuries CE). The book's overall goals are to examine how the Maya may have used, experienced, and interacted with the sculptures. I explore the objects, their carvings, and their physical, architectural, and archaeological contexts and consider how sculptural forms inspired interaction and movement of viewers, performers, and other ritual participants. These interpretations are set in conversation with the broader context of Late Classic Maya religion, ceremony, and politics.

The sculptures of Piedras Negras have long been important to modern studies of the Classic period Maya; in fact, they have been instrumental to scholars in the crafting of groundbreaking arguments concerning history, iconography, dynastic politics, and inter-polity interactions (e.g., Proskouriakoff 1960). This book endeavors to ask new questions about these and other ancient Maya stone sculptures, particularly concerning how they work both as physical things and as powerful, ritually animated entities that humans experience. I focus on how sculptures' forms, compositions, and contexts invited engagement of human bodies, and I also consider how sculptures both reflected and shaped the physical contexts they inhabited. Individual sculptures, juxtapositions, groupings, and site planning are included in this investigation.

Particular deployments of figures and texts encouraged more intimate and kinetic interaction with sacred monuments and the divine figures they embodied, so that, in interacting with monuments, people interacted with the divine. For example, most Piedras Negras sculptures guide movement counterclockwise, a traditional Mesoamerican form of ceremonial procession, which turns looking and reading into a kinetic and religious experience. In moving around monuments, people activated the space around the sculptures, the sculptural bodies, and their own bodies.

The appearance of the carved images of rulers and other personages on sculptures also may have encouraged engagement and connections with those depicted. These could entail respect, worship, witnessing, or fear of the rulers, next to whose monumental forms a viewer would be physically overshadowed. In contrast, the physical dimensions and positioning of the subsidiary figures portrayed were closer to those of a person standing near a monument; they may have had mediating and didactic roles, showing ways of interacting with the more distant, powerful ruler.

Over time, sculptors increased the depth of relief in the stone forms and used various design techniques to create three-dimensional illusions and show the interaction between rulers and other people depicted. I contend that it was more than playfulness, artistic experimentation, or skill in creating exceptional illusions and narratives that was at stake. Instead, these strategies and techniques may have been essential to making objects that could retain rulers' divine essences and at the same time make manifest the living qualities of animate sculptures. This book discusses theories of sculptural animation and the processes and rites through which these stones, whether because of the rock's inherent qualities or through the work of people and divine forces, became sacred or powerful—or *more* sacred or powerful.

Also of import is how the placement and content of the sculptures' carvings intersected with architectural forms, such that these objects inspired engagement with buildings and processional pathways and their ceremonially and socially charged spaces. Likewise, the structures of the built environment provided varying perspectives and pathways for the dynamic viewing and experience of sculptures. The inquiries of this book, therefore, also address the built environment of Piedras Negras and people's use of and movement across its varied spaces.

This book considers sculptures not just at the moment of their creation but also in later years and centuries and investigates how the monuments changed as they persisted through time. Some remained in place and undamaged but underwent transformation because the historical and physical context around them changed. Others were physically altered—whether moved, broken, reset, or buried.

Evidence suggests that older sculptures were perceived to be powerful entities, and interaction with them was analogous to other practices of ancestor veneration. At Piedras Negras, sculptures of living rulers emulated monuments made by their predecessors. By emulation, I mean the practice of making monuments that resembled those of predecessors in order to establish a correspondence between the older and newer monuments—and, thereby, the past and present rulers. At Piedras Negras, sculptural emulation took place by imitating forms, compositions, motifs, costumes, or stylistic attributes. These were not exact replicas but created resemblance through visual references. At Piedras Negras, the newer sculptures were also oriented toward those of their ancestors. As discussed in chapter 3, these associations established correspondence among the monuments and spurred physical and conceptual dialogues among sculptures and the generations of rulers they embodied.

The ancestors' monuments appear to have remained active—witnessing and providing validation for the living ruler and newer generations. Relationships between the sculptures, in concert with architectural and spatial layouts, indicate that people followed and activated the connections among these sculptures through processions and dances. Moreover, people in Late Classic Piedras Negras used these monuments to display and frame history and historical discourse, usually to demonstrate a reigning ruler's authority, but at times to return personages from earlier times to the polity's visible historical narratives.

Chapters 3 and 4 and the epilogue look to Maya sculptures over time, to follow the movements of objects, how they change, and how they participate in social interactions and accumulate histories from those interactions. Studying how Maya sculptures change over time articulates with studies of the life histories or biographies of objects as they move through time and as various humans interact with them (e.g., Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986). Such studies look at both objects that change and the people involved in the changes. Crucial to the analysis is the consideration that objects can accumulate histories, such that “the present significance of an object derives from the persons and events to which it is connected,” as Christopher Gosden and Yvonne Marshall (1999:170) have discussed. This book explores, therefore, not only how Maya sculptures change over time but also how they retain or accumulate histories that become integral to them. These accumulated histories may be known through memory or associated written or oral histories, or they may be materially manifest in the thing. Nevertheless, as explored in the epilogue, objects may lose histories as well.

The book deliberately takes on a relatively small subset of material, the sculpture of one Maya site over a relatively short period—only two centuries. The intention, however, is not only to shed light on the sculptures but also to test an approach through which modern researchers might address what inevitably are elusive questions about ancient experience. Granted, we cannot know how ancient Maya people actually perceived or experienced monuments or space, for experience is subjective, variable, and ephemeral. Nevertheless, we have a wide range of materials that help us reconstruct aspects of the viewing environment and experience. The sculptures themselves and their physical contexts provide some indication of how they invited interaction, and other material evidence reveals aspects of their treatment after they were made.

The sculptures' formal and physical characteristics, including the format and composition of their carved images and texts, give clues about how people had to move in order to see or read them. Their physical contexts, both the natural landscapes and built environments that surrounded them, allow us to explore questions of vistas and visibility and to gauge how sculptures relate to or integrate with physical and social spaces. Furthermore, examination of the spatial relations among sculptures and to buildings, the landscape, and the site-plan offer indications of routes of movement, procession, and performance.

Hieroglyphic texts are also useful in providing narrations of sculptural dedications and the people who conducted them. Likewise, images portraying the ceremonial dedications of sculptures shed light on our understanding of ancient physical and conceptual interaction with them. Images and texts from a variety of media also help illuminate the sculptures' social context in regard to Maya rulers, ancestors, and ancestor veneration. These areas of inquiry are especially important because Maya sculptures more often than not portray or embody rulers, and the sculptures usually remained on view when the rulers died, inevitably changing the monuments' meaning and people's experience of them.

Archaeological excavations provide additional material evidence of how the Maya treated sculptures and employed buildings. Although these, too, are subject to interpretation, the physical indices of human presence, contact, and action from the archaeological record offer glimpses into how people responded to monuments and buildings. Examination of material evidence also allows consideration of the life histories of these monuments.

Together, the investigation of images, texts, the sculptures' visibility, architectural spaces, and the archaeological record also are useful in considering the potential social contexts of ancient Maya gatherings and performances. The built environment suggests a range of possible arenas in which sculptures were dedicated, circumambulated, or otherwise used and experienced. Colonial and modern Maya ethnographies shed further light on these inquiries because they include accounts of ceremonies and other activities analogous to what we see in the ancient material; these similarities may be the result of continuity of belief and practice, albeit with change and innovation. Although these accounts are subject to interpretation as well, their details of participants, actions, and motivations offer possibilities for filling in color, sound, motion, and other aspects of ancient ceremonies, thereby supplementing what survives from the ancient past.

Polity, Place, and Dynasty

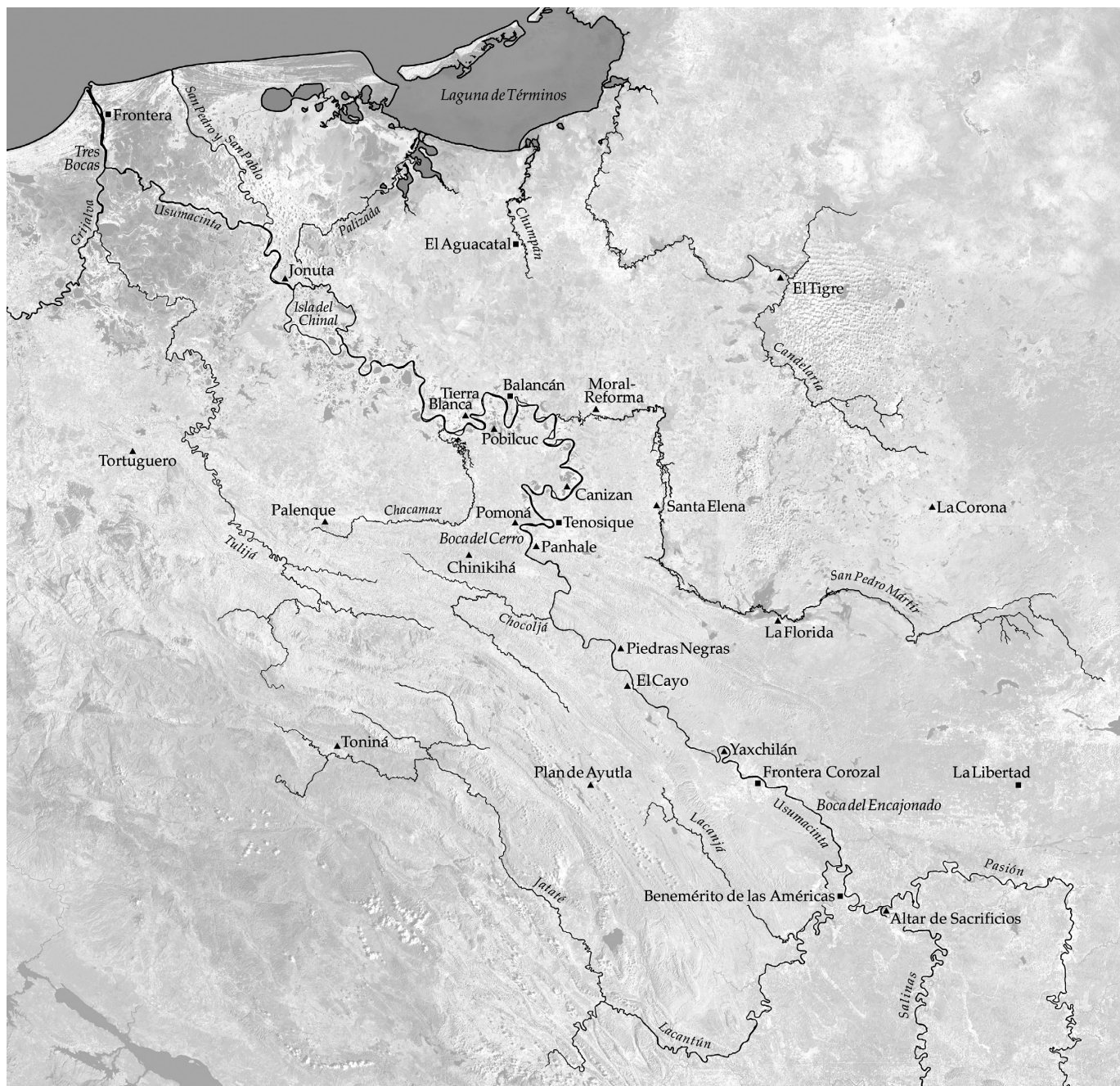
The K'uhul ajaw of Piedras Negras built their city amid hills and canyons at the edge of the Usumacinta River, which flows northwest from the Guatemalan highlands to the Gulf Coast (W. Coe 1959:3) (map P.1, plate 2). Other Maya polities, including Yaxchilán and Pomoná, were also on the edges of this river, and even more kingdoms, known today as El Perú (or Waka'), Bonampak, Lacanhá, Santa Elena, and La Florida, among others, were located on its tributaries and connecting river systems (map I.1). Hieroglyphic texts narrate interactions among these polities, including marriages, celebrations, and battles. The rivers functioned as communication routes for the population of the region, although some parts of the Usumacinta and other rivers in the region are not navigable and require portage (Aliphat 1994:55–56, 180; Canter 2009).

The Piedras Negras emblem glyph was Yokib, meaning “entrance”; correspondingly, a repeating title of the local kings was *k'uhul yokib ajaw*, or “sacred entrance lord” (Houston et al. 1999:16; Stuart and Houston 1994:31) (fig. I.1). Emblem glyphs appeared in rulers' titles and identified the names of their polities or dynasties. However, the place they inhabited could have a different name, and a Maya dynasty could change locations and inhabit various locations.¹ Whereas Yokib was the name of the polity or dynasty at Piedras Negras, David Stuart (2004a) suggests the place may have been called “Paw-Stone.” Stuart observes that this place name was made visible through sculpture, for Altar 4, set in the East Group Plaza, has a tabletop in the shape of a jaguar paw with supports in the form of three-dimensional *tuun* (stone) symbols. The altar's components thus form a three-dimensional glyph of the Paw-Stone toponym.

The buildings of Piedras Negras respond to the natural hills and canyons that constitute the landscape. Although many buildings are now fallen—some pried apart by tree roots and gravity and others dismantled by archaeologists—many of the site's great pyramids still stand, with the tree-covered buildings and swaths of forest offering echoes of the once magnificent city. Nestled into this landscape are architectural forms and open spaces of diverse forms, sizes, and functions. The small buildings and secluded courtyards of the Acropolis would have held only small groups of the royal court or other elite members of the polity.² In contrast, several expansive plazas could have held the kingdom's entire population, which may have been around two to three thousand persons in the Late Classic (Houston et al. 2001:87; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2003:234). Causeways across the hilly topography link the plazas and architectural groups; they would have been used both for mundane travel and ceremonial processions.

Lofty pyramids grow out of the landscape's natural hills. Some pyramids rise more than twenty meters above their stone-faced platforms, and the deep ravines that divide the architectural groups increase the structures' apparent height and mass (Linton Satterthwaite, cited in Morley 1937–38, 3:9). On top of the pyramids are small shrines, the floors and walls of which bear traces of ceremonial fires burned within these rooms.

Epigraphic studies over the last fifty years have revealed the partial biographies of eleven rulers who reigned over the polity from the fifth to the ninth century (Houston 1983; Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Martin and Grube 2008:139–53;



Map I.1. The Usumacinta River region, showing the Usumacinta and other waterways. Courtesy Precolumbia Mesoweb Press.

Proskouriakoff 1960; Stuart 1998b) (fig. I.2). Some rulers' Maya names have been deciphered, but others are known only by modern designations or nicknames.

The chronology and biographical details of the early rulers remain sketchy. The first three, the fifth-century Rulers A and B and the early sixth-century Yat Ahk I (nicknamed "Turtle Tooth" by some scholars), are known only from retrospective texts from Piedras Negras and its neighbor, Yaxchilán.³ Following Yat Ahk I was Ruler C. His name does not survive, but one of his monuments does: he was the patron of Panel 12, the site's earliest extant sculpture. We have much more information for the other seven dynasts, now known as Rulers 1 through 7 or by the transliterations of their hieroglyphic names, most of which include the name *ahk*, or water turtle (Houston et al. 2001:69). Most are named as the child of an earlier ruler, for succession, as at other Classic period Maya sites, was hereditary, with some exceptions (see Webster 2000:86–87).

Each ruler had a personal name but took a regnal name upon accession (see Houston 2009). At Piedras Negras and other polities, it was common to repeat regnal names, although they usually skipped a generation. For instance, Ruler 1's name was K'inich Yo'nal Ahk, and two of his successors, Rulers 3 and 5, took this name; today they are known as K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, II, and III. Ruler 2's name has been deciphered as Itzam K'an Ahk; he is known as Itzam K'an Ahk I, and his namesake, Ruler 4, is called Itzam K'an Ahk II (Houston 1983; Houston 2004:276; Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Martin and Grube 2008:139–53).⁴ This naming system broke down in the late eighth century, for Ruler 6, called Ha' K'in Xook, did not use a dynastic name (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008). He reigned only a short time and may have abdicated (see Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:107; Stuart 2004a:1). His successor, Ruler 7, or K'inich Yat Ahk II, reused the name of the early sixth-century ruler Yat Ahk I (Houston et al. 2001:70).

The Yokib rulers were lords of the sun. They were called *k'in ajaw* or used the *k'inich* (sun-faced) title; they celebrated solar-year anniversaries of their birthdays and accessions (Mary Miller, personal communication, 2010); and the cyclical repetition of time, stela

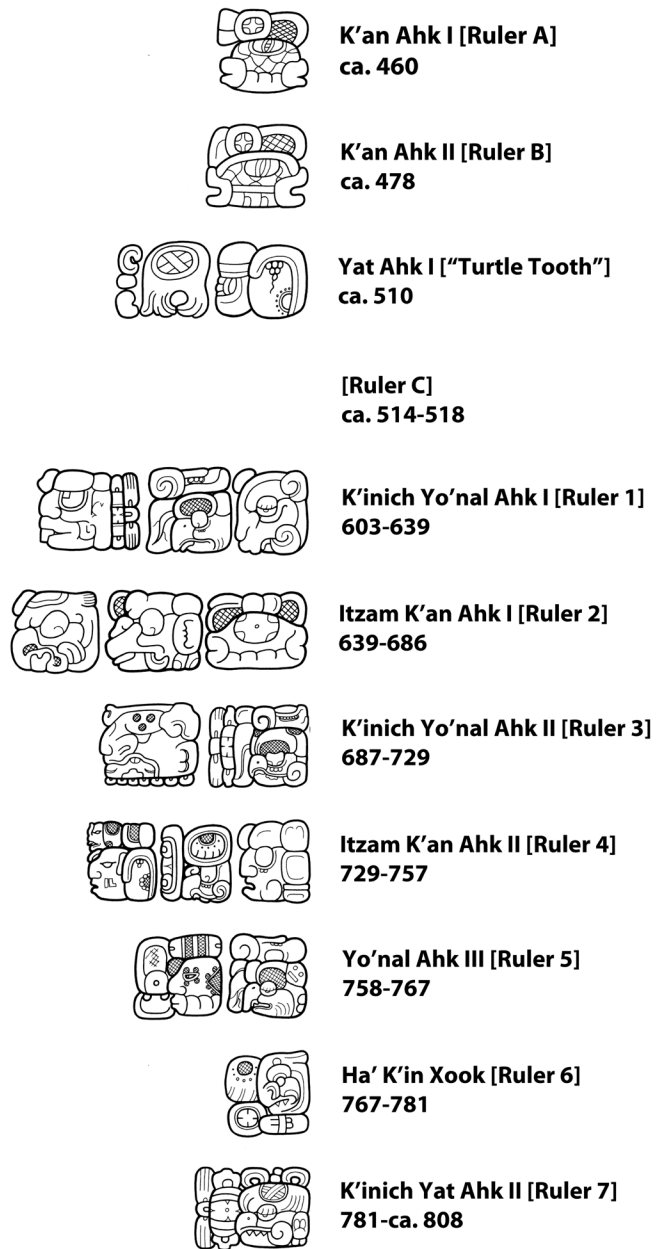


Figure I.2. Piedras Negras rulers and reign dates, adapted from Houston, Escobedo, and Webster (2008); Martin and Grube (2008:142, 148); Teufel (2004:fig. 2.3.2-1). Drawings by Nikolai Grube. Courtesy of Nikolai Grube.

erection, and commemoration of period endings followed the model of the cyclically renewing sun. Both their stelae and altars guided performances to honor living and deceased rulers and at the same time emulate solar movements. These performances included circumambulation, east-west movement that modeled the sun's perceived daily journey, and the ascent of temples that re-created the sun's rising at dawn.

The Monumental Sculptures of Piedras Negras

The corpus of monumental stone sculptures at Piedras Negras includes stelae, altars, panels, and thrones. The Maya quarried most of the stone from stratified limestone outcrops along the Usumacinta River (Satterthwaite [1943] 2005d:180–81) (plate 2).⁵ Sculptors carved the limestone with tools made primarily of chert. The limestone was relatively soft when first quarried, and their tool set for carving included chisels, flakes, picks, and bifaces, some probably hafted onto wooden handles; they also used abrasives for polishing the stone (Woods and Titmus 1996:479–85).

Sculptors' signatures incised on monuments indicate that anywhere from one to eight or more sculptors carved each of the sculptures (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Montgomery 1995:445–46, 528), but more workers undoubtedly were involved in the quarrying, transport, and erection of the stones.⁶ Sculptors' or carvers' signatures consist of a hieroglyph structurally analogous to the *utz'ihb* (the writing/painting of) glyph used on painted ceramic vessels and walls. The phrase used on stone monuments differs; it refers specifically to carved as opposed to painted surface treatment (fig. I.3). The same word is used for dedication texts or signatures on ceramic vessels with incised images or texts (Stuart 1989:153–54).

Some epigraphers have proposed a decipherment of this glyphic collocation as **yu-xu-lu** or *yuxul* (the carving/scraping of), based on Nikolai Grube's reading of the T756a–b syllables as **xu**, although this decipherment remains a matter of debate (Boot 2009; Kettunen and Helmke 2008:20;Looper 1991; Montgomery 1995:5–6, 32–33n6). Regardless, it is clear that it refers to some aspect of carving. The glyph is followed by the artisan's name and may relate to authorship, tribute, or gift-giving (see Herring 1999:173–94; Stuart 1989; 1995:371–73). Sculptors' signatures became more prevalent in the seventh and eighth centuries, particularly in the Usumacinta River drainage.

Carved dedication statements include ancient names for stelae. Stuart (1996:151–54) deciphered one name for stelae as *k'uhul lakam tuun*, which he translates as "sacred big stone" or "sacred banner stone." This name appears, for example, on Copán Stela A as well as other monuments across the Maya region. The qualifier *k'uhul*, or holy, was used to refer to both stelae and altars.⁷ A common phrase used in monument dedication statements in the Piedras Negras inscriptions is *k'al tuun*,

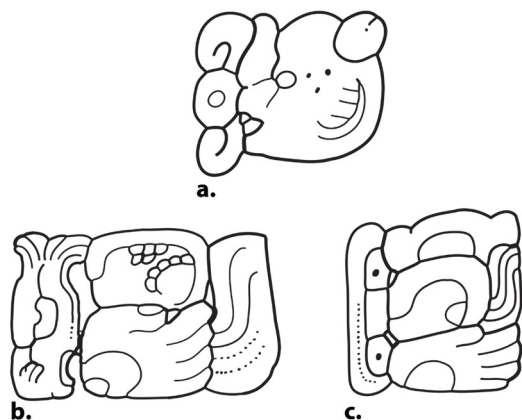


Figure I.3. Glyphs used in carvers' signatures (top) and dedication statements (bottom). a. *yu-xu(?) -lu* or *yuxul* (the carving/scraping of), from Piedras Negras Stela 12 (R1). b. *u k'al tuun* (his or her stone-binding), from Piedras Negras Stela 12 (B12). c. *u yax k'al tuun* (his or her first or precious stone-binding), from Piedras Negras Stela 6 (A18). Drawings by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT, after David Stuart.

which Stuart (1996:154–57) translates as “stone-binding” (fig. I.3). This inscription appears on the stelae of most of the Piedras Negras rulers, including K’inich Yo’nal Ahk I’s Stelae 25 and 31; Itzam K’an Ahk I’s Stelae 32, 34, 37, 38, and 39; K’inich Yo’nal Ahk II’s Stelae 3, 4, 7, and 8; Itzam K’an Ahk II’s Stelae 9 and 22; Yo’nal Ahk III’s Stela 16; and K’inich Yat Ahk II’s Stelae 12 and 15. It is also used in dedication statements for Itzam K’an Ahk II’s Altar 2 and K’inich Yat Ahk II’s Throne 1 (see Teufel 2004:45, fig. 2.2.2-13). The most common form of this phrase is *u k’al tuun*, “his/her stone-binding.” On Stela 6, the phrase is *u yax k’al tuun*, “his/her first stone-binding” or “his/her precious stone-binding,” which marks this monument as the first that K’inich Yo’nal Ahk II dedicated (fig. I.3).

The predominant mode of design on the Piedras Negras monuments was relief carving. Some Maya sites, including Copán and Toniná, used local volcanic tuff and sandstone, respectively, to make nearly or fully three-dimensional sculptural forms. However, the stratified limestone at Piedras Negras and many other sites was less conducive to sculpting in the round. Sculptors thus relied on low-relief design, using foreshortening, overlap, occlusion, and other techniques to convey the illusion of three-dimensional forms. Although most images are in profile and low relief, rulers’ faces on stelae frequently are shown frontally and with greater depth of relief (plate 3).

Rulers dedicated these monuments to mark the ending and beginning of calendrical periods—especially *katuns*, or twenty-year periods—amid rites of community and cosmic renewal. At Piedras Negras, it was common also to mark *hotuns*—five-year periods—with sculptures (Morley 1946:336). These dates are carved onto the sculptures and commemorate both the period ending and the monument’s dedication.

Flora Clancy (2009:13) questions whether the Maya erected stelae at the time of their dedication dates. She raises this suspicion in regard to K’inich Yo’nal Ahk II’s stelae in front of Structure J-4, remarking that they may have been dedicated in the order in which they stood, from left to right, and not in the order of their stated dedication dates (Clancy 2009:109). However, for the most part, it is clear that we can accept the dedication dates on monuments as accurate.⁸ Indeed, it is highly improbable that K’inich Yo’nal Ahk II’s stelae were carved in order from left to right because Stela 6, installed third from the right, was his niche monument that celebrated his first hotun in power and must have been dedicated first.

The Classic Maya recorded dates in multiple calendar cycles of varying duration that made up a structure of time perceived to be both cyclical and linear (Farriss 1987; León-Portilla 1994; O’Neil 2005:98–101, 110–18). A Calendar Round date—such as 5 Kib 14 Yaxk’in—identifies a day in the 260-day sacred calendar and the 365-day solar calendar, which together form a cycle that repeats every fifty-two years (fig. I.4). The Maya used calendar rounds to emphasize the cyclicity of time, particularly in the ubiquitous celebration of period endings commemorating the ending of one cycle and the beginning of another.

However, a perception of linearity in the structuring and expression of time is evident in the use of the Long Count. The Long Count recorded the number of days that had transpired since the beginning of a 5,125-year cycle with a starting point in 3114 BCE, and this system allowed the Classic period Maya to identify unique days in that large span of time. Long Count dates consist of a series of numbers that represent the amount of completed cycles of progressively decreasing quantities; for example, the date 9.12.2.0.16 records 9 *bak’tun* (400 years or 144,000 days), 12 *k’atuns* (20-year

Figure I.4. An Initial Series date with explanation of each component of the Long Count: *bak'tun*, *k'atun*, *tun*, *winal*, and *k'in*, in addition to other calendar cycles and lunar information, after Martin and Grube (2008:13). This text records the date 9.12.2.0.16 5 Kib 14 Yaxk'in. It correlates with 4 July 674 CE (GMT + 2 correlation and Julian calendar). It is the birth date of Lady K'atun Ajaw. Hieroglyphs from Piedras Negras Stela 3, detail of drawing by David Stuart, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

	A	B	A	B
1			Introductory Glyph (patron deity of month Yaxk'in)	9 bak'tun (9 x 144,000 days)
2			12 k'atun (12 x 7,200 days)	2 tun (2 x 360 days)
3			0 winal (0 x 20 days)	16 k'in (16 days)
4			5 Kib (position in 260-day tzolk'in cycle)	(Glyph G: 7th "Lord of the Night," in cycle of 9)
5			(Glyph F, which modifies Glyph G)	27 huliij (27 days since arrival of New Moon)
6			(Glyph C: 2 lunations completed in 177-day cycle of 6 lunations)	(Glyph X, which modifies Glyph C regarding lunation)
7			29 (days in current lunation)	14 Yaxk'in (day and month in 365-day haab cycle)
8			sihyaj (she was born)	
9			Ixik K'atun Ajaw (Lady K'atun Lord)	
10			Ixik Namaan Ajaw (Lady Lord of Namaan)	

periods), 2 years (of 360 days), 0 *winal* (months of 20 days), and 16 *k'in* (days) since the starting point in 3114 BCE; this date correlates with 4 July 674 CE (fig. I.4).

The Long Count system allowed specificity in the recording of historical events and monument dedications, and most sculptures with texts had Long Count dates narrating when the sculpture was dedicated and by whom. However, the Long Count was itself part of a larger cyclical structure; its 5,125-year cycle was one of other repeating cycles of the same length (Aveni 2002:187). Nevertheless, this cycle was so large that the dates attached to human events were unique, thus making time linear within the experience of the Classic period Maya (see Farriss 1987:578–79).

The use of Calendar Rounds enforced and conveyed repetition and cyclicity, such that the past would be replayed in the present, with dynamic interaction between the linear and cyclical structures of time and history. The Long Count allowed different moments to be distinguished from one another, but it also allowed ancestors and descendants to be juxtaposed in different ways, making both distant and proximate events and actors visible at the same time. Because of this, Nancy Farriss (1987:573) explains that for the Classic period Maya, linear time was “incorporated into an all-encompassing cyclical pattern.” In such an understanding of time, forward movement may be interwoven with cyclical repetitions that bring distinct cycles and personages together. Yet according to Farriss (1987:575), “it is the repetitive pattern of events that counts and not their exact duplication.”

Furthermore, Charles Golden (2002:72–74) notes that the Classic period Maya, like their colonial period counterparts, may have used these cyclical systems in response to disruptions such as conquest or other social upheaval, emphasizing the cyclicity and the continuity of time and rulership in order to establish, maintain, or feign order in the face of change or chaos.

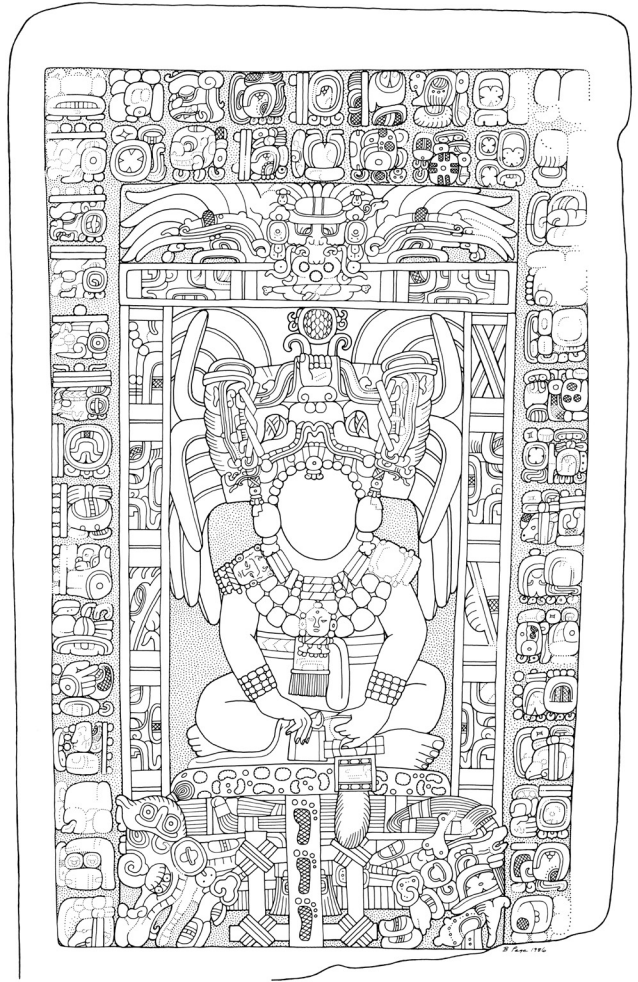
STELAE

The freestanding vertical stela was a common sculptural form at Piedras Negras. Stelae are taller than they are wide and loom upward like an upright human form (Mary Miller, personal communication, 2000). The massive, vertically rising stone confronts the living person standing before it and impresses and overwhelms the human body. Weighing as much as six tons and measuring as tall as 4.85 meters, as does Stela 40, Piedras Negras stelae generally were erected in front of buildings, whether in plazas or on platforms or terraces overlooking plazas. A few stelae (the earliest and latest at the site) were located on top of pyramids (Mason 1935:560–61; Morley 1937–38, 3:47–49).

Most stelae were carved with images of the *k'uhul ajaw* and other personages such as their wives, mothers, subordinates, and captives. Hieroglyphic texts narrate ceremonies of period endings and events such as birth, accession, death, and warfare victory. Texts also may refer to earlier period endings commemorated by the current ruler or to ones celebrated by his predecessors. Two Piedras Negras stelae, 29 and 36, have only hieroglyphs and no images. Stelae 42 and 44, from the South Group, were plain, without texts or images (Satterthwaite ([1933] 2005a:19). Sylvanus Griswold Morley (1937–38, 3:47–48) maintained that they once had carvings that had been destroyed. However, they may have always been plain and part of a tradition of erecting plain stelae, also evident at other Maya sites (see Stuart 1996:158).⁹



a.



b.

Figure I.5. Front, Piedras Negras Stela 25, limestone, 608 CE. a. Photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #59-50-20/74011.1.2. Digital File #97470002. b. Illustration by Barbara Page from *Maya History* by Tatiana Proskouriakoff, edited by Rosemary A. Joyce, Copyright © 1993. By permission of the University of Texas Press.

The Maya carved images and texts on the sides and backs of stelae, but the principal focus was the image of the k'uhul ajaw on the front. David Stuart, Stephen Houston, and Karl Taube have argued that the carved stones were representatives or doubles of divine kings, vital images holding aspects of a king's "extendible essence" (Houston, Stuart, and Taube 2006:57–101; Stuart 1996). To approach a monument may have been deemed akin to approaching the king, and the presence and power of image and object were undoubtedly palpable. At Piedras Negras, monuments remained standing long after the death of the k'uhul ajaw featured on them. They were loci for the memory of rulers and ancestors, and because they were dedicated on successive and parallel calendar endings, they also were materializations of the cyclicity of time and its continued commemoration by the Yokib lords.

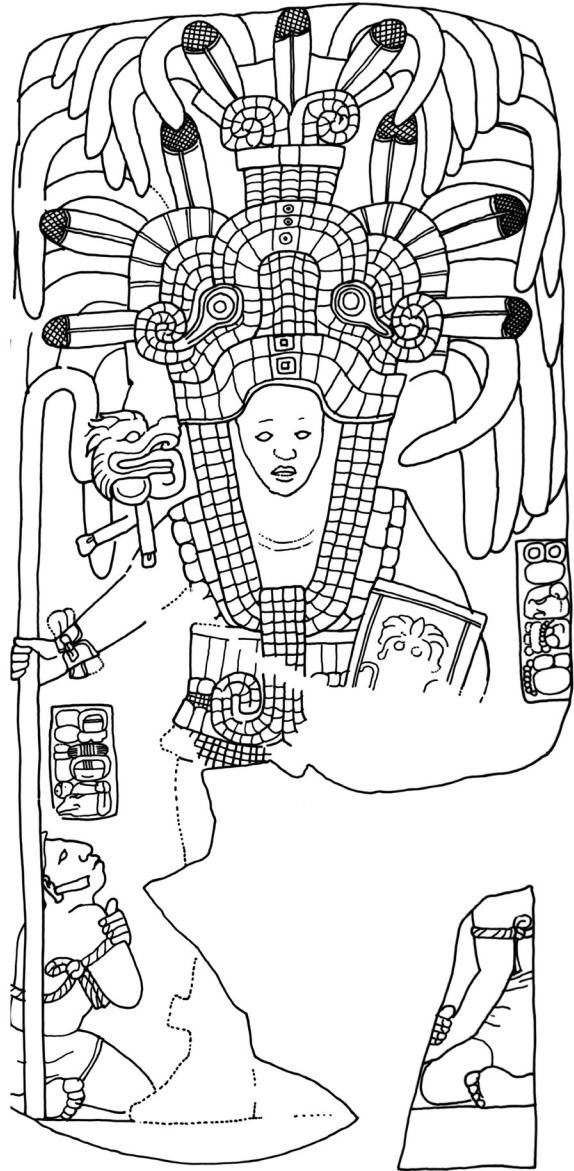
The images shown on the various stelae share some common themes. In his 1940 Harvard undergraduate thesis, William S. Godfrey (1940:56, 111–13) used letter designations to distinguish the repeating themes on Piedras Negras stelae. The letter designations enabled him to track changes in their design over time. Later, when Tatiana Proskouriakoff addressed the repetition of themes carved on the monuments, she focused on two principal themes and named them with terms connoting rulership and warfare, specifically the "ascension motif" (now also called the "niche" type) and the "warrior motif" (Martin and Grube 2008:142; Proskouriakoff 1960; Stone 1989).

K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I initiated the niche and warrior motifs in the early seventh century, and his successors emulated his monuments, albeit with innovations, for two centuries. With their "niche" stelae, rulers commemorated their accession to kingship and the completion of their first hotun, or five-year period, in office. On the front of the sculpture, the ruler is usually shown enthroned on a cushion covered by a jaguar pelt or a woven mat and set in a niche (e.g., fig. I.5). The niche is surrounded by elements conveying a supernatural location; these elements may include a skyband (with sun, moon, and star symbols) signaling a celestial location. A large supernatural bird, nicknamed the "Principal Bird Deity," sits above the niche (Bardawil 1976; Stone 1989:155).¹⁰ Below the niche is what Stuart has nicknamed the "Starry Deer Crocodile," a creature that is part deer and part crocodile that bears both star signs and a sun-marked sacrificial bowl containing bloodletting implements for autosacrificial offerings (Clancy 2009:30; Joralemon 1974:59; Robertson 1974; Stone 1985; Stuart 2005:89; Taube 2004b:275, 277). In this location, marked as supernatural, the ruler is elevated to a celestial realm through the ceremonial act he performs.¹¹

In these scenes, rulers wear few clothes, principally a loincloth and jewelry of jade and shells. They also wear elaborate headdresses bearing birds, deity heads, and at times the rulers' names. The headdresses sprout long quetzal feathers, and Stelae 6 and 25 have maize rising from them (Stone 1989:155). The rulers hold incense bags, often marked with the date of the period ending, showing they are primed for ritual related to calendar renewal. In a few (Stelae 11 and 14), a human body is sacrificed at the base of the scaffold. Citing the presence of images of maize and blood sacrifice, Andrea Stone (1989) demonstrates that these niche stelae concern agricultural and cosmic renewal and that rulers used the commemoration of their first hotun ending while in power to focus on their role as providers or participants in maize production and world renewal.



a.



b.

Figure I.6. Front, Piedras Negras Stela 26, limestone, 628 CE. a. Photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #2004.29.7562. Digital File #98790013. b. Drawing by Linda Schele, © David Schele, courtesy Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org.



Figure I.7. Piedras Negras Altar 1, limestone, 692 CE. Photograph ca. 1933, courtesy of the Penn Museum, Image #175939. Altar originally had three supports; an extra pile of stones (at right) supporting the tabletop was added in the twentieth century.

The warrior stelae, on the other hand, show the king dressed in battle garb, frequently with imagery from the Central Mexican site of Teotihuacan (Stone 1989) (fig. I.6). Teotihuacan-inspired elements include an enormous war serpent head-dress that engulfs the ruler's head. Also in this assemblage are abundant feathers, jewelry made of beads and mosaic plates of jade and shell, and often a shield and a serpent staff or spear. Kneeling at the king's feet are bound captives who are frequently identified by name and polity in captions near their bodies.

Another common type of stela portrays the ruler scattering incense on a period ending. Examples are Itzam K'an Ahk I's Stelae 32 and 34, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Stela 2, and Ha' K'in Xook's Stela 13 (see Godfrey 1940:56; Simpson 1995).¹² Other images on stelae, such as that on Stela 5, place the ruler in a mythological setting and surrounded by deities, mythical animals, and other supernatural entities.

These diverse portrayals highlight different aspects of the Maya ruler, whose actions as ceremonial participant and warrior were integral to success in the realms of ritual, fertility, cosmic renewal, and warfare. Portrayals of Maya rulers as ceremonial specialists or warriors are also juxtaposed at other Maya polities, although they may be deployed differently. For example, in contrast to the juxtaposed Piedras Negras stelae, the fronts of Yaxchilán stelae frequently portray rulers dressed as warriors lording over captives, whereas the backs of stelae portray the same rulers performing bloodletting or other ceremonial rites (see Tate 1991).

ALTARS

Another sculptural type was the tabletop altar, a square or disk of stone set on three or four supports. Each part could be carved with images and texts (fig. I.7). Like stelae, altars were dedicated at period endings, and their texts often referred to past and future period endings, thus celebrating the repetition of temporal cycles, the people who commemorated them, and the renewal enacted at these period endings.



Figure I.8. El Cayo Altar 4, limestone, 731 CE. Drawing by Peter Mathews. Courtesy of Peter Mathews.

placed on benches, altars, or floors of temple shrines. They were used in secondary depositions as well, for three were cached in stela cists in K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's reign (W. Coe 1959:38; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:25, [1936] 2005c:150). Although most are plain, one portable cylinder altar—called Miscellaneous Sculptured Stone 1—had a carved text that mentions K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's death.

PANELS

Rectangular stone panels, much smaller than the massive stelae, were another sculptural type. They are wider than they are tall, measuring from 1.26 to 1.44 meters long and from 55 centimeters to 1.28 meters high (plates 4, 5).¹³ Although initially designated “lintels” (Maler 1901:58–60), they were not used as door lintels. Instead, they likely were placed on walls or on the front faces of platforms, piers, or benches (Morley 1937–38, 3:35). Proskouriakoff hypothesized that they were set on masonry altars built into pyramid stairways, as seen in her reconstruction of Panel 7 on Structure K-5 (Proskouriakoff 1963; n.d., 3) (fig. I.9). Houston and Escobedo (2005a:3) decipher the dedication verb of Panel 7 as *t'abayi*, which they translate as “*elevado en su lugar*” (raised up in its place). This may correlate with the raising of the panel up the pyramid or its placement on a vertical structural surface.

The altar tops were flat, likely for the placement of offerings or censers for burning incense or rubber. Altar 4 from the nearby site of El Cayo, or Yax Niil, shows a *sajal* (a subordinate lord or provincial governor) named Wayib K'utim making an offering with a censer on a table altar (Martin and Grube 2008:150–51) (fig. I.8). Notably, he holds an incense bag similar to the ones held by Piedras Negras rulers on their niche stelae; the date of the El Cayo ceremony is a period ending (Martin and Grube 2008:150; Zender 2002:172).

Other altars were much smaller stone cylinders. Column altars had tenons that were inserted into floors at the tops of pyramids, in shrines, or on pyramid stairways, usually on the central axis. Some showed evidence of burning; they were surrounded by burned ceramics and ashes from offerings made on and around them (W. Coe 1959:90, 93–94; Mason, n.d.b, 27, 42, 48; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:24). Other cylindrical altars, which Satterthwaite called “drum-shaped” stones, did not have tenons for insertion into floors. They were portable and were probably

Each panel shows a narrative scene of multiple figures interacting. A common scene is a ruler standing above kneeling warriors or captives; at times members of the royal family and court are depicted. Each panel's text spans two or more rulers' reigns—that of a deceased ancestor and a living ruler, often his son. Each text principally records events in the life of the deceased ruler; it then often recounts his death and ends years later with a successor conducting a burning or censuring ceremony in the ancestor's tomb. Each panel's image is likely a posthumous depiction of the ancestor commemorated in that ceremony. Evidence suggests that these panels are associated with the honored ancestor's funerary pyramid, where the burning ceremony took place (Escobedo 2004; Fitzsimmons 1998; Houston et al. 1999:13; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:105; Houston, Escobedo, Forsyth, et al. 1998:18–19; Houston, Escobedo, Terry, et al. 2000:10). Burning ceremonies were carried out in tombs, but others may have been performed on the pyramid. Indeed, Stuart (1998:398) suggests that the Maya may have placed censers with burning offerings on masonry altars that supported the panels, comparable to what Proskouriakoff portrayed in her architectural rendering of Structure K-5 (fig. I.9).

THRONES

Another sculptural type is the stone throne. Throne 1, comprising a table on legs with a back panel, was installed in a niche in the back wall of Structure J-6 in Court 1 of the Acropolis (Morley 1937–38, 3:253–54) (fig. I.10). All parts of the throne were carved with texts or images, and the back panel had a zoomorphic mountain head with two human faces emerging from the eyes.

Excavations have uncovered fragments of other thrones, including Throne 2, which was reused in Structure K-6a, one of the buildings of the West Group ballcourt, but its original location is not known. Houston, Escobedo, and Webster (2008) attribute Throne 2 to Itzam K'an Ahk I and suggest the breakage and burial of Throne 2 and another throne fragment may have resulted from palace renovations and not from violent desecration of his memory.

Color

Many of the Piedras Negras sculptures were once covered with a layer of white stucco and painted bright colors, including red, blue, green, and black. Morley recorded traces of pigments on the stelae in the early part of the twentieth century. Among the stelae of the South Group, the oldest at the site, the only surviving color is bright red. Red paint is observed on Stelae 25, 26, 34, and 35 and may have been the only pigment used on these early monuments (see Godfrey 1940:30; Morley 1937–38, 3:54–82).

A wider range of colors appears on later monuments, especially on K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's stelae on the J-1 terrace, Itzam K'an Ahk II's stelae on the J-3 terrace, and Yo'nal Ahk III's Stela 14 on Structure O-13. The color on the niche monuments has survived best, for the niche protected the color from weathering (Morley 1937–38, 3:128, 192, 281). Color use on the later stelae correlates with the content of the carvings. For instance, backgrounds frequently were painted dark red; human skin was bright red; jadeite earflares, collars, and wristlets were green; and feathers were bluish-green. The enormous serpent headdresses with green heads, red mouths and



Figure I.9. Architectural reconstruction of Piedras Negras Structure K-5-1st, with Panel 7 placed on a masonry altar on the stairway's center line (near the top of the stairway). Watercolor rendering by Tatiana Proskouriakoff. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #50-63-20/18484. Digital File #98790001.



Figure I.10. Piedras Negras Throne 1, limestone, 785 CE. Photograph by author. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala.

eyes, and bluish-green feathers must have been dramatic and impressive (Morley 1937–38, 3:128–281).

Little remains today of the bright, bold colors that adorned the Piedras Negras monuments, but a painted stucco panel from Palenque's Temple XIX (plate 6) and Lintel 1 from Bonampak provide useful comparisons for inferring their tonal qualities. As with those examples, the presence of color would have transformed the appearance and increased the legibility of the images and texts carved on Piedras Negras monuments. Besides enhancing legibility, color could be descriptive: elements were painted the color of the forms they imitated. The green of the jade costume elements and serpent heads and the bluish-green (the Maya color *yax*) of the feathers were essentially descriptive. Color also was expressive; that is, it had symbolic value.¹⁴ The rulers' skin on sculptures was a bright red, which may have been both descriptive and expressive. Rulers may in fact have painted their skin this color. Paintings on the North Wall of Room 1 of Bonampak Structure 1 show a noble being painted by his assistants. In addition, Diego de Landa recorded that Yucatec Maya men in the sixteenth century painted their skin red (Tozzer 1941:89). In this sense, the red coloring on the stelae may have been descriptive, portraying rulers as they appeared in life.

But the red painting of their skin, both on flesh-and-blood rulers and on carved sculptural forms, also may have been expressive or symbolic, for it conveyed the emanation of heat from the bodies of these rulers, who had qualities of solar divinities. They were called *k'in ajaw* (sun lord), and multiple rulers, such as Yo'nal Ahk I and II and Yat Ahk II, used the title *k'inich*, or sun-faced, in their names.¹⁵ The color red is commonly associated with the sun for the Maya and other Mesoamerican groups. Red is the color of east because it is the place of sunrise, and red was the color of the tree erected in the east at creation, as recorded in the *Chilam Balam* manuscripts (Craine and Reindorp 1979:119; Roys 1967:33, 99–100). In cases where color survives in depictions of the sun god, K'inich Ajaw, such as the stucco architectural mask on the façade of the Early Classic Yehnal building in Copán Temple 10L-16, his face is painted red (plate 7). The red coloring of the Piedras Negras rulers' skin may have conveyed that their skin and bodies—and the sculptures that embodied them—contained or reflected the extraordinary heat and power of the sun.

Houston and Tom Cummins describe how rulers' bodies in Mesoamerica were considered different from ordinary human bodies, the operative characteristic across several cultures being heat. They cite early colonial-period Nahuatl descriptions of rulers' faces as being "fiery" and blazing, "like torches or firebrands," and the bodies of rulers and elders as discharging "hot 'soul force' or *tonalli*, a term etymologically linked to 'warmth of sun'" (Houston and Cummins 2004:365, citing Karttunen 1983:245–46; López Austin 1988, 1:290, 399; and Maxwell and Hanson 1992:176, 179, 182; see also Houston and Stuart 2001:55). Houston and Cummins also cite similar concepts among the Tzotzil Maya, for "in Colonial Tzotzil, 'majesty'—and, revealingly, 'tyrant'—equated to the 'hot breath, air or wind (*k'ak'al ik'*) that emanated from the king" (Houston and Cummins 2004:365, citing Laughlin 1988, 2:558). Likewise, Gary Gossen (1974:37) affirms an association exists between heat and power—particularly regarding ceremonial power—among the modern Tzotzil Maya of San Juan Chamula, for whom body heat is understood to increase with age

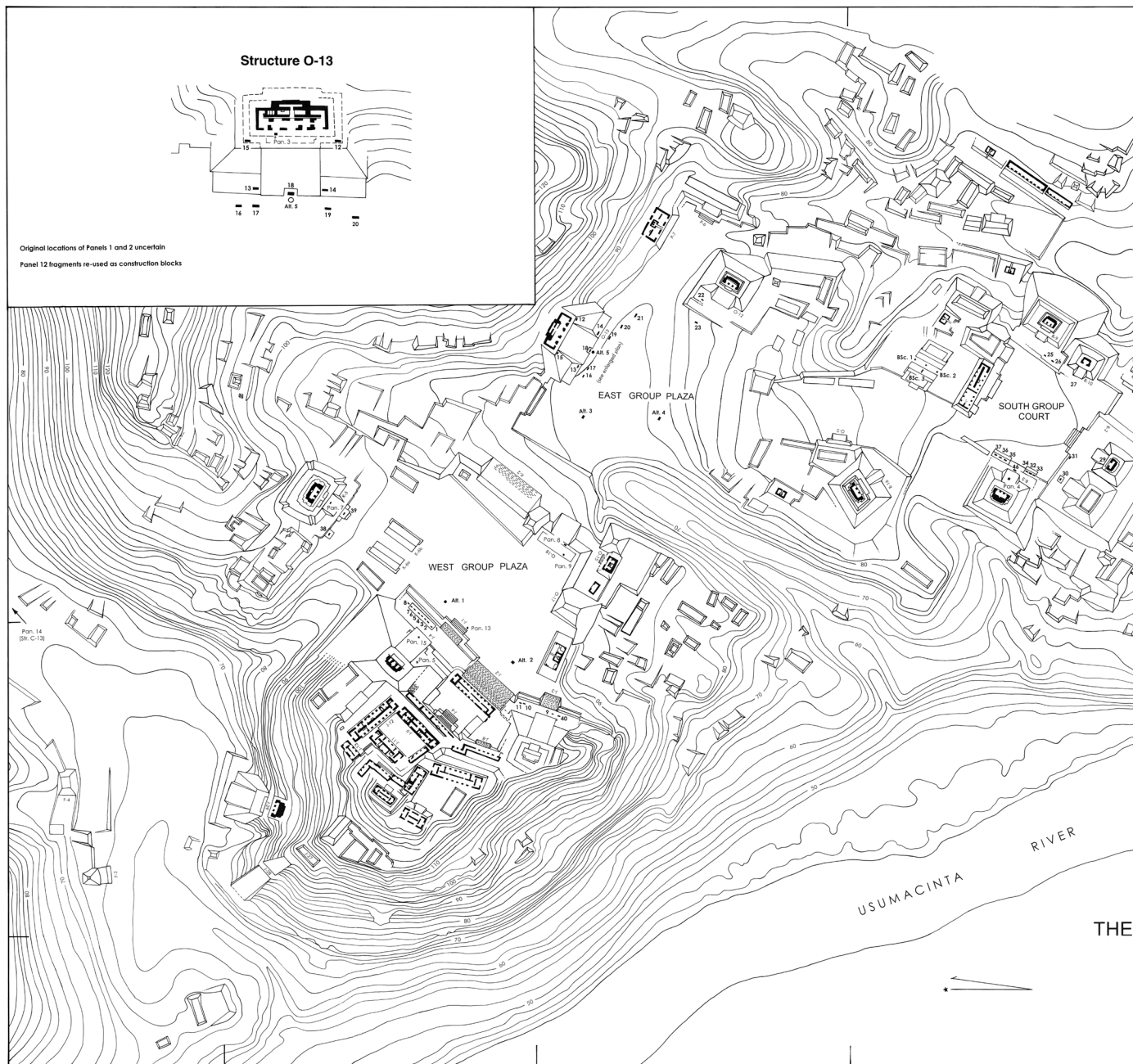


Figure I.11. Plan of Piedras Negras, drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College, with modifications by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT.



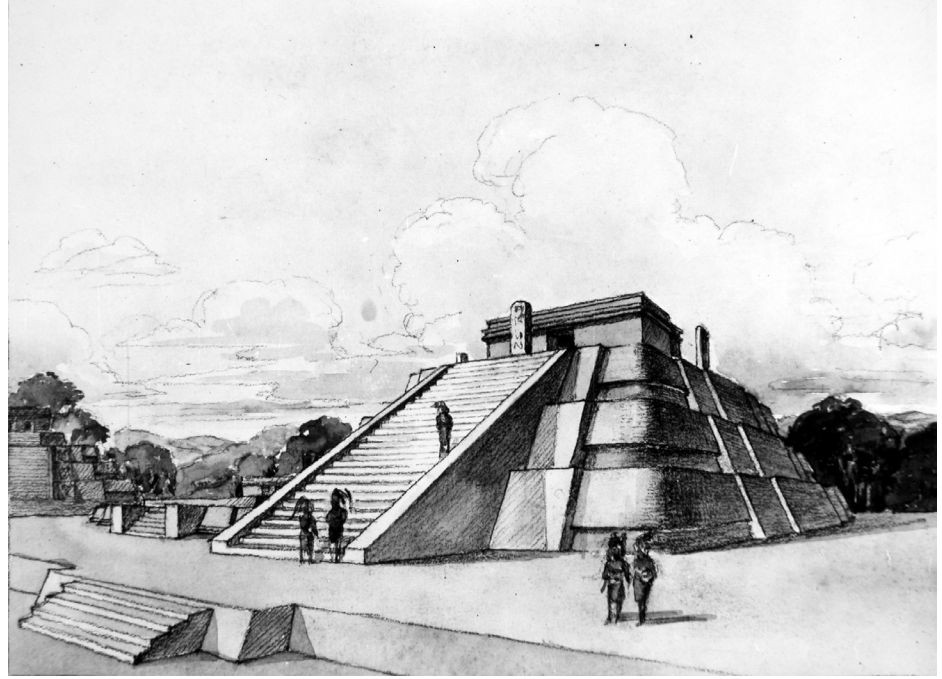
and spiritual practice, such as the holding of a cargo or a shamanistic career.¹⁶

In addition to traces of pigment, Piedras Negras stelae had holes for inlays, likely of shell, obsidian, or jade, for features such as serpent fangs and earflares (Godfrey 1940:32–33; Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Morley 1937–38, 3:60; Proskouriakoff 1950:163). Morley records holes on Stela 26, and Godfrey proposes that holes on Stelae 31, 34, and 35 once held inlays. The practice was more prevalent in the South Group monuments, although Houston, Escobedo, and Webster (2008) suggest that a hole in the bench portrayed at the base of Stela 40 may have held inlays as well (see fig. 3.6). In addition, I propose that the small holes in K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's collar on Stela 8 may have held inlays. Made of colorful shells, jade, and obsidian, they would have glinted in sunlight and firelight. Both the bright colors and the sparkling inlays would have contributed to the effect of these monuments being sacred entities that emitted light and heat.

Sculptures across the Piedras Negras Landscape

The sculptures of Piedras Negras were distributed in three main areas, today called the South Group, West Group, and East Group. These were the principal locations for successive sets of rulers to install sculptures, with the earliest rulers—Rulers 1 and 2 and possibly the earlier Rulers A–C—in the South Group; Rulers 2, 3, and 4 in the West Group; and Rulers 5, 6, and 7 in the East Group (fig. I.11). In addition to these clusters of sculptures, carved stones are found in other parts of the site. These include a carved boulder on the bank of the Usumacinta River, southwest of the South Group, and a carving on a cliff face that portrays a turtle whose shell bears a date of

Figure I.12. Piedras Negras Structure R-3, with Structure R-1 at left. Watercolor rendering by Tatiana Proskouriakoff. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #58-34-20/41000. Digital File #CI030088.



5 or 7 Ajaw and commemorates a period ending (Maler 1901:42–43, fig. 16; Taube 1988c:188–89, fig. 3b).

Residential complexes on the edge of the site core were occupied by secondary nobles (see Jackson 2005:548–86). More modest houses were located farther from the center (see Webster and Kovak 1999). Houston and collaborators have determined that the city's core covered about eighty hectares, and its supporting zone was around three hundred hectares (Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2003:216).

The earliest dated sculpture from Piedras Negras is Panel 12, from circa 518 CE. But excavations have uncovered evidence for much earlier occupation at the site, including ceramics and buried architecture from the Middle and Late Preclassic and Early Classic periods in the South Group. For example, the Piedras Negras Archaeological Project (PNAP), carried out jointly by Brigham Young University and the Universidad del Valle of Guatemala (BYU-del Valle) found a Late Preclassic structure inside Structure R-3. They also found a vaulted Early Classic tomb (Burial 110) with rich offerings, possibly a royal burial, in Structure R-8-sub 1 (J. Child and M. Child 2001; M. Child 2006:437–43; Forsyth and Hruby 1997:208–209; Holley 1983:71; Houston and Escobedo 2001:612; Muñoz 2002:1–2).

Preclassic occupation was light and was primarily concentrated near the river (Muñoz 2002:2). The site suffered a large-scale decline and near depopulation at the end of the Late Preclassic. Nevertheless, there was resettlement and revival from the fourth to the sixth centuries, when populations moved from the countryside into the center of Piedras Negras as well as Yaxchilán (Golden et al. 2008:252). Early Classic monumental construction at Piedras Negras was primarily concentrated in the South Group (Houston 2004:272–73).

Archaeologists also found Early Classic constructions and ceramic use in other areas of the site, particularly in the West Group (Forsyth and Hruby 1997:209; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2003:222–24; Muñoz 2002:3). In fact, excavations by the BYU-del Valle project revealed what appears to have been an Early Classic palace beneath the West Group Plaza; its buildings, made of wattle-and-daub, or *bajareque*, featured platforms, monumental staircases, patios, and water drains. However, excavation found the buildings burned and flattened. Evidence suggests they were destroyed at the end of the Early Classic, perhaps during a battle lost to Pomoná in 554 CE, though later they were more systematically leveled as part of the reconfiguration of the West Group Plaza (Escobedo and Houston 1998:413; Garrido 1999; Golden 2002:354–58; Houston 2004:274–76; Houston et al. 1999:14; Houston and Escobedo 2001:613–14; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:100–103; Houston, Escobedo, Terry, et al. 2000:10–11; Muñoz 2002:6).

A few early sixth-century stone sculptures have been found, including Panel 12 from 518 CE, but the site's early sculptures are mostly eroded or broken, and some were reused in architecture or buried in caches. The earliest stelae do not have hieroglyphic dates but probably come from the sixth century. They were found in the South Group Court in association with Structures R-3 and R-4 (fig. I.12). The heavily eroded Stela 30, dated to 534 CE, was in front of Structure R-4 and had a carved figure; the all-glyphic Stela 29 and the plain (or completely eroded) Stelae 42 and 44 were found on Structure R-3's summit (Morley 1937–38, 3:35–48). Although texts and images remain on some of these monuments, they are either fragmentary or eroded, and it is unclear which ruler dedicated them. Nevertheless, we know a bit about the early rulers from Panel 12, as well as from later monuments that narrate events from the past and from inscriptions at Yaxchilán (Martin and Grube 2008:140–41).

K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I would install his monuments in the South Group in the beginning of the seventh century (plate 8). Golden (2002:365–66) suggests that he chose the South Group both to associate his reign with the polity's more ancient past and to distance his reign from the polity's sixth-century defeat at the hands of Pomoná, a defeat that was materialized in the destroyed buildings of the Early Classic palace.

The Late Classic occupation is better understood than the earlier periods. It was a time of larger populations and more extensive construction throughout the site, and the monumental sculptures erected during those centuries remained standing until the polity's collapse. Nevertheless, some buildings were not maintained, including Structure R-16, a large pyramid in the South Group that appears to have been in ruins during the Late Classic (Escobedo and Zamora 2001c:376–77; Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008). The polity collapsed in the early ninth century, possibly related to Yaxchilán's capture of K'inich Yat Ahk II, although limited occupation continued at Piedras Negras in the ninth century (Houston et al. 2001).

During the polity's Late Classic florescence, rulers' stelae generally were grouped together in front of one building, often the funerary hill of the ruler's predecessor (Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:105). Such installations physically associated the ruler with a revered ancestor. The last three sets of sculptures, from K'inich Yo'nal Ahk III, Ha' K'in Xook, and K'inich Yat Ahk II, were clustered on Structure O-13, Itzam K'an Ahk II's funerary pyramid, such that these rulers displayed a

connection to their common ancestor (Houston, Escobedo, Forsyth, et al. 1998:18–19; Houston et al. 1999:13).

For the reigns of Rulers 1 to 4, the clustering of sculptures of individual rulers in front of one or two buildings also makes salient the patterns of emulation across monuments of different generations, for each monument grouping was clearly distinguished from the others, even as they made references to other monument clusters and the rulers they embodied. Although there was innovation, the larger emphasis was on tradition and continuity; sculptures provided links to the past through the repetition of pictorial and textual content, form, and composition.

These intergenerational affinities were accentuated by the way sculptures were oriented and aligned, although the type of orientation changed over time. Monuments from different generations in the South Group faced each other. But in the late seventh century, sculptural associations became dependent on processions along causeways connecting the city's South, East, and West Groups. The sculptures subsequently were oriented to the causeways and people who walked along them, signaling a transformation in how they were experienced and performed. Another change took place in the second half of the eighth century, when most of the last three rulers' sculptures were installed on Structure O-13. Those rulers' sculptures were concentrated in one place. Still, the sculptures also looked to the processional causeways and to the older sculptures in other parts of the city.

The Maya also reused monuments from earlier reigns on Structure O-13. They moved them from other buildings and incorporated them into Structure O-13; some were reset and others buried. By relocating and reusing objects from the past, the Maya both venerated ancestors and reshaped historical narratives. And through these sculptures and their interrelation, the Maya created and performed memory at Structure O-13—the site of numerous ceremonies involving offerings and burning rites. The particular ways they reused sculptures indicate that the Maya perceived them as representatives from the past that necessitated reverential treatment, comparable to what is seen at other Maya sites, including Yaxchilán, Tikal, and Copán (O'Neil, n.d.).

In all of these contexts, the kinetic nature of the experience of Piedras Negras sculptures, involving movement around individual sculptures and across multiple sculptures, is apparent. And in the processions, performers would have used sculptures to link past and present in the service of authorizing rulership, constituting community identity, commemorating time's passage, and activating world renewal. Moreover, through these sculptures and the processional routes connecting them, the Maya integrated historical dialogues and ancestral commemoration into the landscape, marking these routes—and not just the places they connected—as sites of memory.

The last interaction with Piedras Negras sculptures in the Late Classic period was the smashing of stelae, panels, and the throne of K'inich Yat Ahk II in the early ninth century, probably by Yaxchilán warriors intent on destroying their rival polity's symbols of political and religious authority (Houston 2004:276; Stuart 1998b). Smashing was a not uncommon way that the Maya interacted with stone sculptures, as enemies destroyed the symbols of power and attempted to extinguish the life force of the sculptures and the personages they embodied. Their intentional destruction tells us much about their potency. In fact, the massive destruction of the later sculptures

at Piedras Negras—and Yaxchilán as well—reminds us of the power the sculptures had in their original context. These sculptures, therefore, have great stories to reveal across the millennia, both in their wholeness and in their fragmentation.

Audiences and Places of Viewing and Performance

One concern of this book is to re-create glimpses of human reception or experience of these sculptures. But in order to address such questions, we must try to determine who their audiences were. There would have been multiple audiences with varying degrees of access to the monuments. Undoubtedly there were multiple and varied occasions of viewing and also performance, including dedications amid grand festivities and smaller rites attended by few people.

Each person's background, level of literacy, and position in society would have influenced his or her reception of the sculptures. The question remains, who understood what of the sculptures' texts and images? Houston and Stuart have suggested that during the Late Classic, literacy rates were relatively low.¹⁷ Nevertheless, there would have been other degrees of literacy, with some people recognizing only names, numbers, or dates, and others recognizing verbs as well as more complex meanings (Houston and Stuart 1992:591–92).

Performance or recitation may have made these texts, monuments, and histories more accessible. Cecil Brown (1991:490) has suggested that Maya monuments in public locations were “not to be read *by* the public but to be read *to* the public.” Houston and Stuart (Houston 1994:30; Houston and Stuart 1992:590–91) also emphasize models of public reading, recitation, and performance that contrast with modern notions of personal, silent reading (see also King 1994). Moreover, Houston (1997:299–301) proposes that the alternation of incomplete and complete endings on verbs in the inscriptions is suggestive of performance discourse, that “Maya texts employ shifts in aspect and deixis to grip the listener, heighten drama, and authenticate narrative through the bridging of present with past story worlds.”

We do not have written records of who had access to what parts of Maya cities, but we can use various kinds of evidence to reconstruct who might have been able to see or interact with the monuments. One strategy is to examine the spaces where the monuments stood, whether set in large, open plazas or in smaller, less accessible throne rooms or shrines, and to consider the size of these spaces and potential access to them. Portrayals that the Maya themselves made of gatherings and performances in those places can be considered in tandem with information about social structure that has been reconstructed from hieroglyphic inscriptions and ethnohistoric and ethnographic analogy. Also essential is archaeological evidence for the performance of ceremonial rites and other activities in plazas, terraces, pyramids, stairways, and shrines.

Mary Ellen Miller (1986), William Fash (1998:240–42), and Takeshi Inomata (2006a:197–98) have addressed the topic of differential sizes of spaces and access to them at Classic Maya sites such as Copán, particularly its Great Plaza versus the East Court of its Acropolis. Fash (1998:240–42) also considered the potential standing capacity for plazas and the possibility that stairways were used for seating and as stages. Following this line of inquiry, Inomata (2006b:812–14) calculated plaza sizes

in relation to the amount of space required per person to determine how many people could fit in plazas at Copán, Tikal, and Aguateca. Houston has addressed these issues for Piedras Negras, analyzed as a series of gradations of more open and closed spaces in the palace architecture. For instance, he describes how palaces such as the Piedras Negras Acropolis may reflect “minute gradations of open and closed space, leading to ever more restricted locations within the inner precincts of royal life.” He ties these “open” and “closed” features to “the most important resource at court: access to the ruler” (Houston 2004:271).

Sculpted and painted depictions give an idea of what took place in, or at the edges of, ancient plazas. For example, the paintings of Bonampak Structure 1 portray elaborate dances and captive presentations on stairways. They do not show audience members, but based on the architectural forms depicted relative to the site’s actual architecture, we can hypothesize that large audiences would have gathered in Bonampak’s main plaza to witness and participate in such dances.

Evidence from colonial period and contemporary Maya performances and ceremonies augment the ancient material and pictorial evidence. Inomata (2006a:193–95) summarizes several colonial period accounts of performances and dances that took place in the plazas of Maya towns. He cites Landa’s description of a sixteenth-century Yucatec dance involving eight hundred men who danced during an entire day and even more people who supported the dancers by bringing them food and drink (Inomata 2006a:193, citing Tozzer 1941:94). People from other places attended such dances, which also were important for diplomacy among towns. For instance, Inomata (2006a:193) makes reference to a description from the *Relación de Campocolche* that describes a gathering of fifteen hundred people, including people who had traveled from other places. Maya communities in Guatemala and Mexico, including San Juan Chamula and San Lorenzo Zinacantán, continue to gather in town plazas for elaborate dances.

At Piedras Negras, large public performances would have taken place in the plazas, on the stairways and platforms of pyramids, on the wide stairway between the East and West Group Plazas, and on the megalithic stairway of the Acropolis façade. The plazas were grand, open spaces where many people—perhaps the whole city’s population—could gather for ceremonies and other performances (Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2003:234; see also Inomata 2006b).¹⁸

Tabletop altars were installed in the expansive West Group Plaza and the East Group Plaza, where large groups of people may have gathered and even approached the altars. Stelae were installed in courts and plazas, on small platforms or taller terraces edging plazas, and on top of pyramids overlooking the large plazas. Stelae on high terraces, such as K’inich Yo’nal Ahk II’s stelae on the J-1 platform, and on top of pyramids, such as K’inich Yat Ahk II’s Stela 12 on Structure O-13, would have been less accessible but still visible to people standing in the plazas. From the plaza, one could see the front of these stelae with their looming, colored images of kings, though their details, backs, and texts would not have been discernible from that distance or viewpoint.

Apart from the question of who could see these monuments is the question of who could approach them. The images of witnesses on stelae—such as a ruler’s mother or wife or titled elite courtiers or visitors—looking up at a ruler performing a ceremony give us an idea of who could draw near the king, and they probably were the ones privileged enough to approach stelae as well. Yet captives who were presented

on stairways and terraces also may have come close to the monuments and their displays of earlier prisoners.

Besides stelae, other monuments were located in inaccessible places. Carved panels were found on stairways or at shrines. Because they were high on buildings and because their texts and images were smaller, they required close-up viewing most likely reserved for a small subset of the population, perhaps only the ruler, his family, courtiers, and esteemed visitors. Thrones likewise were installed in small, secluded spaces where only a few people could convene.

Images of royal court scenes in small throne rooms give indications of who had access to the throne room. Piedras Negras Panel 3, for example, shows an enthroned ruler in the company of a small group of people, including his heir, members of the court, and visitors from Yaxchilán, all gathered in an intimate space (plate 5). A number of Classic period painted vessels portray similar scenes of gatherings in small rooms, showing only a limited number of people near the k'uhul ajaw. Sarah Jackson (2009) demonstrates that such images on vessels convey the importance of proximity to the k'uhul ajaw, for those persons with elite titles generally are shown closest to him. They would have been the people who could witness a k'uhul ajaw's ceremonial performance or present him with gifts or tribute.

Although we know there were curtains in palaces, depictions of court scenes show the curtains tied up, perhaps allowing people outside the rooms to see glimpses of the gatherings. Inomata (2006a:203) has investigated sight lines into such courtly spaces; he cites the vista from a causeway into the throne room of Aguateca Structure M7-22, which allowed visibility into the throne room even "to those who were not allowed into the Palace Group." Certainly there were times when vision was restricted, when curtains were drawn while more restricted rites took place. But the possibility of sounds or smoke traveling beyond those curtains and people outside hearing or seeing them is certainly plausible. The fact of glimpsing or hearing may have made these ceremonies and the people who participated in them appear all the more powerful to those excluded from these spaces and ceremonies.

The performances at Piedras Negras imagined in this book, both the more secluded and the more public ones, would have been important occasions with several purposes. Indeed, considering performance is essential because the monuments function as records of actual presentations, witnessing, and performance, and they were permanent commemorations of ephemeral yet critical events. The images on them, therefore, evoke ceremonial rites and dances, and the objects themselves were physical indices of those performances. Later performances would have taken place in dialogue with the images of and objects from the earlier performances.

One purpose of performance in Maya cities would have been to create and sustain social memory and community identity through commemorative ceremonies, analogous to Paul Connerton's theorization of the role of commemorative ceremonies in the shaping of communal memory and historical narratives (Connerton 1989:4–5, 45, 61, 70). Performances of the objects and spaces at Piedras Negras thus not only accomplished religious functions but also participated in the formation and sustenance of communal memory and identity.

Performances at Piedras Negras also may have served as displays of power. William Ringle (1999:199–200), following Victor Turner ([1969] 1995, 1974), writes of Late Preclassic Maya communal rituals as occasions for social cohesion as well as for

the display and delineation of power and hierarchy. Inomata (2006a:210–21) likewise has argued that performances in Late Classic Maya polities were performances of power, particularly “to define and maintain asymmetrical power relations.” According to Inomata, the performances involving displays for the larger community were “opportunities for elites to assert their images as moral leaders of the community,” and more restricted rites defined and affirmed “social categories and ranks through the right and duty of participation.” MatthewLooper (2009:7–9), however, urges consideration of “local definitions of power” that “may be linked to more dispersed notions of agency” as well as “locally defined sources of strength,” to which dance, as well as “dreams, trance, or ritual purity,” may provide access.

The importance of movement during performance may also be thought of in relation to Maya conceptions of the circulation of *ch’ulel*, or life force, through people, animals, and plants, as well as through monuments and buildings. Ringle (1999), for example, has compared the movement of people during ritual processions in Late Preclassic Maya site centers to the circulation of *ch’ulel* in the blood. He further proposes that it is the motion of processions that is efficacious, because it both re-creates the circulation of *ch’ulel* through the universe and enacts its circulation through the site (Ringle 1999:187–88, 200). Following Ringle’s model, performances at Piedras Negras may not have been simply about display or power but instead about the activation of energy through humans, animated objects, and the landscape. The monuments of Piedras Negras indeed inspire motion. The enacting of motion and the movement of *ch’ulel* may have been especially crucial during the renewal rites and performances held at period endings.

Finally, these monuments may have themselves been active simply through their presence and what they materialized. Indeed, one thread of this book is the investigation of the materiality of the monuments, their carvings, and their contexts. I am working with a definition of materiality that involves close attention to material qualities of things as well as to the values people attribute to materials, or as Nicholas Saunders (2001:223) concisely explains, of “matter contextualized by aesthetics and ideology.” Key to theorizations of materiality is the consideration of subject–object relations and how these may change or, as Christopher Tilley (2007:18) writes, what material “properties mean in different social and historical contexts and how they are experienced.”

In my examination of the materiality of ancient Maya sculptures, I strive to explore not only what values people gave to the material qualities of these objects but also how these objects made meaning and acted through their material qualities, whether in concert with or apart from their carved and painted images. Some aspects of monuments could not be seen, whether because they were wrapped in cloth or out of sight on the tops of pyramids, but apparently they remained meaningful (Stephen Houston, personal communication, 2009; Stuart 1996:156–60). They may have been revealed on certain occasions, such as dedications, festivals, or anniversaries, and their revelation could have been part of the performance. Alternatively, their intended audience may have been gods and ancestors (see Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008). Even so, their meaning and potency may have resided not in their content or its legibility but in the very presence and imputed agency of the objects and their material qualities.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 of this book reviews the historiography of Piedras Negras and its sculptures. It examines the history of interpretation of these sculptures and Maya sculptures in general and also discusses the book's theoretical frameworks, stemming from art history, anthropology, and archaeology.

Chapter 2 examines ways that Piedras Negras sculptures invited people to interact with them. It looks at how monuments' shapes, sizes, placement of carvings, and architectural contexts encouraged people to move toward and around them and interact with them (and who or what they embodied). I argue that the content of the texts and images, the form of the monuments, and the activation of them by viewers and performers were integral to the monuments' meaning. Furthermore, I examine how sculptures reflected and shaped ambient space and the social and cultural meanings of that space.

Chapter 3 focuses on how multiple sculptures in groups were experienced. I examine how the interplay between sculptures and the addition of new sculptures transformed their apparent relationships, as well as people's experience of them. For example, I consider sculptures that make visual reference to other sculptures and are oriented toward them. These references and orientations create ostensible relationships and dialogue among them. I also propose that sculptural juxtapositions and other orientations encouraged people to move among the monuments during performances that activated connections across generations and expanded narratives of memory and history.

Chapter 4 focuses on Structure O-13, which was Itzam K'an Ahk II's funerary pyramid and the locus of sculpture installation for the polity's last three known rulers. I study the objects made for and moved to Structure O-13 and examine this place as a site of memory effected through the creation of new sculptures and the reuse of older ones. In addition, I discuss archaeological evidence for ceremonial performances involving movement up the pyramid and ritual burning in its shrine. Furthermore, I argue that the burial of older sculptures served to sanctify the structure, venerate ancestors, and shape historical discourse.

The epilogue turns to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to focus on physical changes to the Piedras Negras sculptures, examining the fates of fragmented, looted, and recarved monuments that were transformed into commodities and works of "art" and moved via networks of the international art market into private collections and museums.

This book thus explores the use and reuse of the sculptures of Piedras Negras from the ancient past to the present, albeit with a gap of over a millennium between the abandonment of Piedras Negras in the ninth century and visits by Lacandon Maya and outsiders in the nineteenth century and later. Although not typically studied in tandem with ancient practices, more recent uses and physical modifications of sculptures are essential parts of their life histories and cultural biographies. Furthermore, the sculptures' new physical conditions and contexts—fragmented and displaced from the locations where the Classic period Maya installed them—affect our own ability to see and analyze them. The massive Stela 3 addressed in chapter 2, for instance, has been reduced to a pile of small pieces, and this fragmentation neutralized or extinguished its physical power and the intricacies of its engagement

with human bodies. Yet, close examination of its original form and context indicates that it once obliged people to move around it and that its forms and placement responded to socially charged spaces of the city. Such an understanding can come only from attempts to re-create and re-imagine conditions of viewing that are lost, not only because of the ephemerality of experience, but also because the very materials and contexts in question have been destroyed.

This book seeks to reactivate the physical spaces around these sculptures, looking for clues to how the sculptures in their architectural context may have inspired their reception and performance. The focus is Piedras Negras, but the approaches and results are relevant to other Maya sites and other cultures, because they bring to the fore the sculptures' material natures and affective force as objects that were seen, touched, and manipulated in the ancient past. Through such analysis, we also come closer to discerning the religious and political implications of the monuments' original production and functions, and how the Maya may have perceived them as the sculptures endured through time. This book also hopes to contribute to our understanding of the Classic Maya use of texts, images, objects, and ceremony in the creation, display, and performance of memory. Finally, we become more attuned to these objects' performative qualities and to how human engagement with them enlivened ambient space and the people who approached, used, and experienced them.



Map P.1. Maya region and select sites. Cartography by Matt Dooley.



Plate 1. (Facing page, top) Piedras Negras Structure K-5.
Photograph by Sarah Jackson. Courtesy of Sarah Jackson.

Plate 2. (Facing page, bottom) Usumacinta River at Piedras
Negras. Photograph by Sarah Jackson. Courtesy of Sarah
Jackson.

Plate 3. (Right) Front, Piedras Negras Stela 14, limestone,
ca. 761 c.e. The mother of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk III (Ruler
5) is shown in profile and in more shallow relief than her
son, who is depicted frontally, his face and body emerging
three-dimensionally from the stone. Penn Museum Object
#L-16-382. Photograph by Night Fire Films. Courtesy of
Night Fire Films and the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de
Guatemala.





Plate 4. (*Facing page, top*) Piedras Negras Panel 2 (Lintel 2), limestone, 667 CE. Photograph courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #00-36-20/C2740. Digital file #96350006.

Plate 5. (*Facing page, bottom*) Piedras Negras Panel 3, limestone, ca. 782 CE. Photograph by author. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala.

Plate 6. (*Right*) Palenque Temple XIX, Sculptured Stucco Panel. Photograph by Jorge Pérez de Lara. Courtesy of Jorge Pérez de Lara. CONACULTA-INAH-MEX. Reproduction authorized by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.



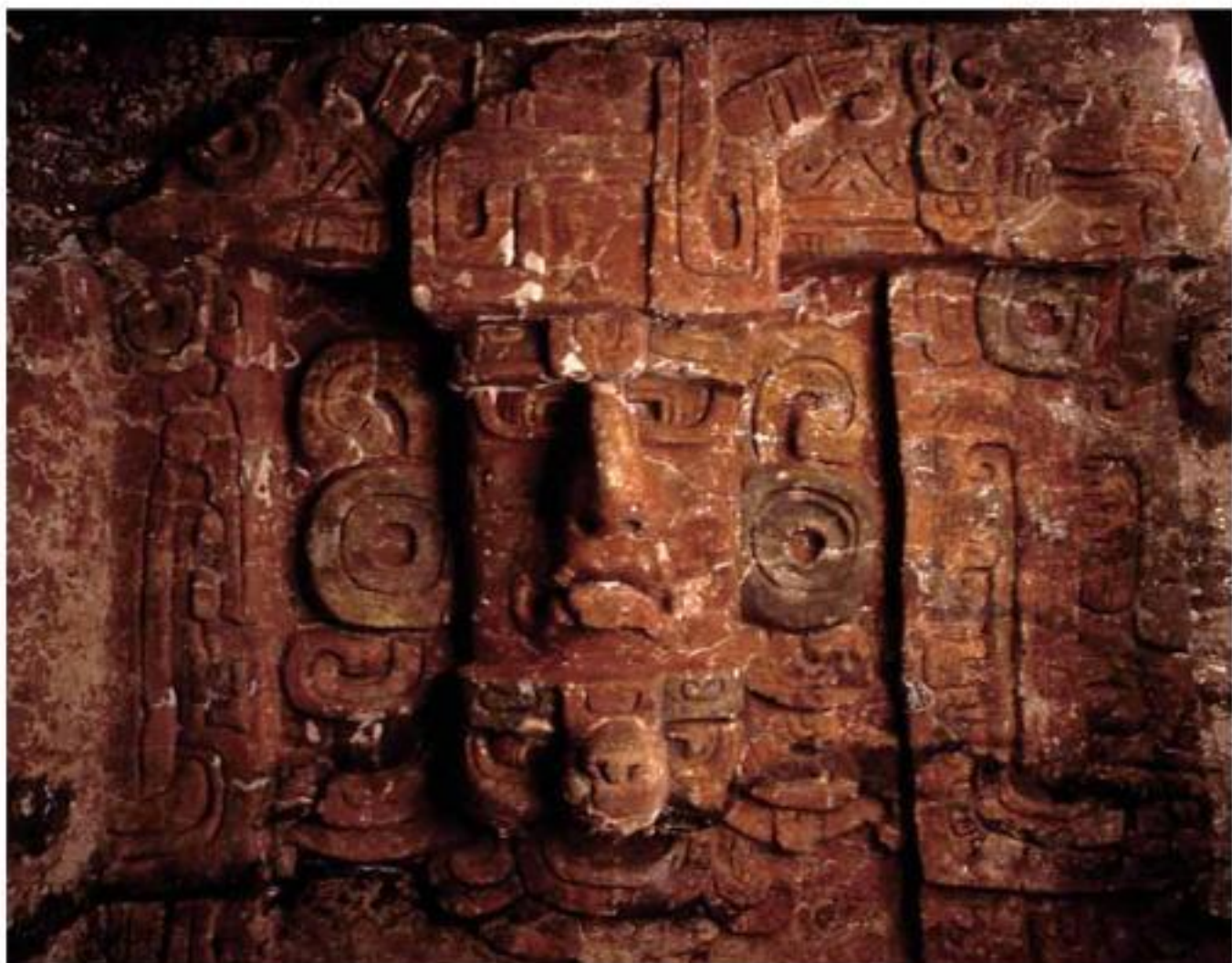


Plate 7. Painted stucco architectural mask of the Sun God, K'inich Ajaw, Copán Temple 10L-16, Yehnal Phase. Photograph courtesy of the Early Copán Acropolis Program and the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia.

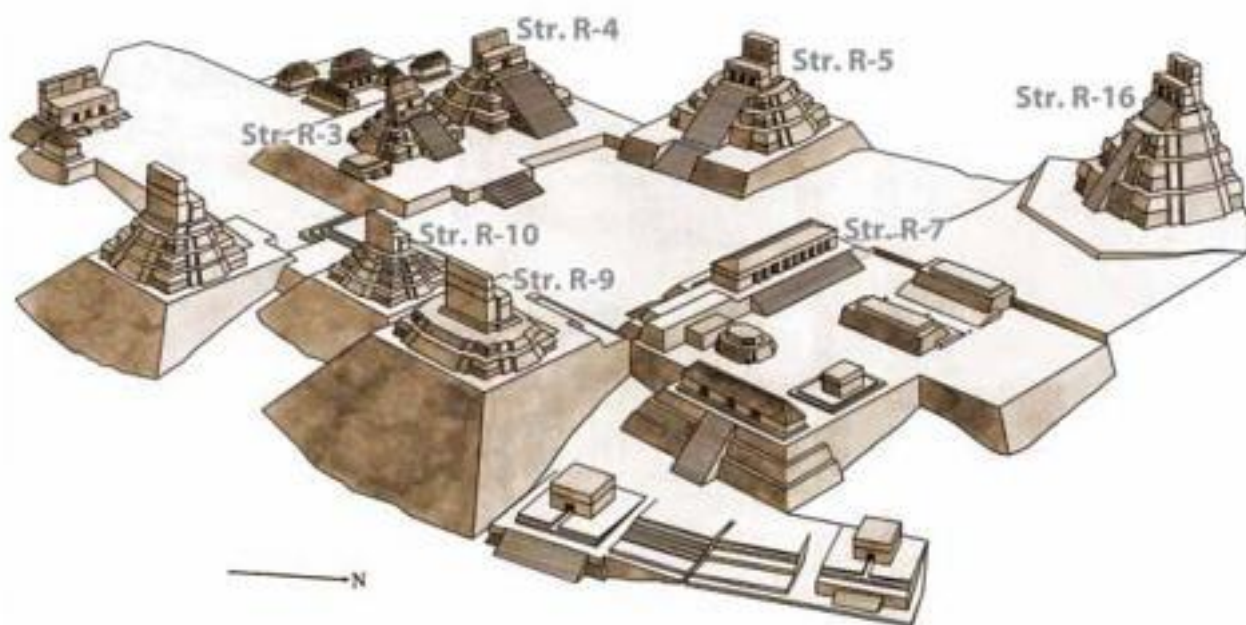


Plate 8. Rendering of South Group in the beginning of the Late Classic (without stelae). Drawing by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT, after Mark Child (Golden and Child 2008:80, fig. 3.10). Courtesy of the University Press of Colorado and Kevin Cain.

Plate 9. (*Overleaf*) Left, front, and right sides of Piedras Negras Stela 15, limestone, 785 C.E. Photographs by author. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala.



Histories of Interpretation and Theoretical Frameworks

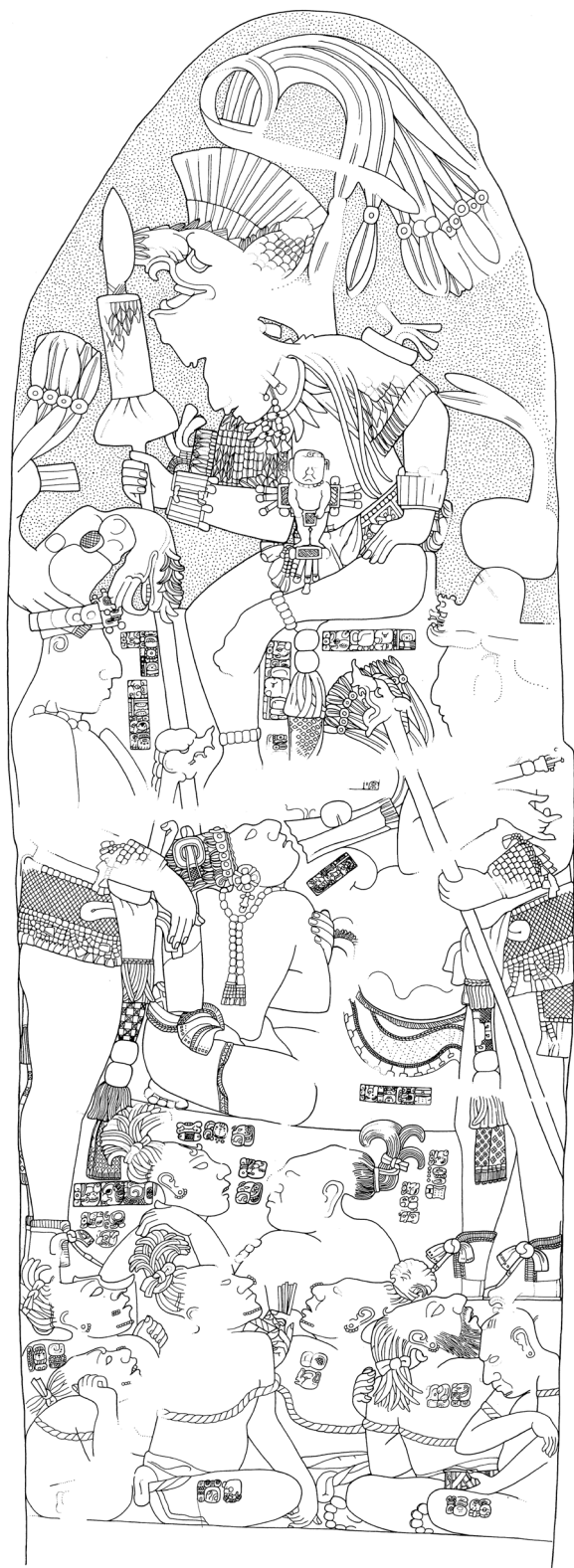
The archaeological site and sculptures of Piedras Negras have played an important role in scholarship on the Classic period Maya civilization. But modern understandings of this civilization, crafted in part from scholarship at Piedras Negras, have varied over the past century. By studying the differing interpretations of the site and its sculptures, we may delve not only into the accumulated knowledge about the place and its histories but also into the changing approaches to the study of the Classic period Maya.

In ruins by the ninth or tenth century CE, Piedras Negras lay abandoned for many centuries. The remains of nineteenth-century pilgrimages to the ruins by Lacandon Maya people who lived in the region are the first evidence of visitors after the Late Classic. They burned copal offerings in ceramic vessels called *u lakil k'uh* (called “god-pots” in English), which they left in the ruined buildings and on plazas at Piedras Negras as well as at Yaxchilán (Houston et al. 2001:84–85; Satterthwaite 1946:16–18; Stuart and Graham 2003:6).

Outsiders began to move through the region in the nineteenth century for exploration and exploitation of the jungle’s natural and cultural resources, including lumber and chicle.¹ Morley (1937–38, 3:1–2) credits Emiliano Palma of Tenosique, Tabasco, who was involved in the mahogany trade, as the discoverer of the Piedras Negras ruins, stating that Palma alerted the Austrian explorer and photographer Teobert Maler to their existence in 1895. However, David Stuart and Ian Graham (2003:6–7) contradict Morley’s statement, mentioning that Juan Galindo may have made reference to the ruins decades before, in an 1833 report on the Usumacinta and Pasión rivers, and that a French tourist, Louis Chambon, visited the ruins in 1889 with a guide. In addition, they correct Morley’s account of Maler’s first visit, noting that it was not Palma but Don Tránsito Mejenes, a lumber agent, who showed Maler the ruins.

Maler undertook the first major documentation of the site, its buildings, and its monumental stone sculptures. Over the course of four trips from 1895 to 1899, he found and photographed Stelae 1–37, Altars 1–5, and Panels 1–2 and 4–7 (Morley 1937–38, 3:2). Maler published the photographs in his *Researches in the Central Portion of the Usumatsintla Valley* (1901), in which he also described the sculptures, the site layout, and the locations of the sculptures in relation to architecture.

Maler’s publication made the sculptures of Piedras Negras and other sites in the region known to a larger audience outside the Petén. In addition, his black-and-white photographs remain an essential source for the study of the sculptures, and they are the only surviving record of some sculptures that subsequently were looted



or destroyed. Maler's actions, nevertheless, damaged some sculptures, for he turned them over to photograph their carved surfaces and left them exposed to erosion (Mason 1934:2).

The Piedras Negras sculptures appeared in only a few publications in the first decades of the twentieth century. These included Herbert J. Spinden's *A Study of Maya Art: Its Subject Matter and Historical Development* (1913), in which Spinden discussed the Piedras Negras sculptures and other Maya objects in terms of iconography and meaning. Spinden (1913:25, 56, 155, 190) made discerning observations about the sculptures and their carvings. He suggested that Maya sculptures portrayed human rulers and that the inscriptions contained historical accounts,² but this hypothesis gained little traction, and scholars such as Morley and J. Eric S. Thompson explicitly denied this possibility for decades. In a later publication, Spinden identified images of warriors and miserable, bound captives in Piedras Negras sculptures such as Stela 12 and described these monuments as "memorials of conquest" (Spinden [1916] 1977:442; see also Spinden 1913:190–91) (fig. 1.1). Both Morley and Thompson rejected those interpretations as well.

Spinden's focus was on iconography and meaning, but other early twentieth-century writers concentrated on form and aesthetics in interpreting and evaluating ancient Maya sculpture. In his 1918 *Burlington Magazine* essay on American archaeology, British art critic Roger Fry (1918:155, 157) advocated for looking at ancient American objects, including Piedras Negras Stela 26 and other Maya works, "seriously as works of art." His description of these monuments as sculpture of aesthetic interest aligns with a trend Elizabeth Boone (1993:331–42) characterizes as the aestheticization of pre-Columbian art. Boone presents a broad picture of the various ways that critics, collectors, curators, and modern artists transformed and aestheticized pre-Columbian objects in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Figure 1.1. Front, Piedras Negras Stela 12, limestone, 795 CE.
Drawing by David Stuart, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Fry (1918:155, 157) also wrote of his judgment of the superiority of Maya art and civilization to that of the later Aztec civilization, which he said had adopted “the general scheme” of the Maya civilization but was “less civilized” and “more warlike.” He compared this change to that of Greece and Rome, the implication being that the earlier Maya civilization was more civilized and artistically superior, analogous to how ancient Greece was imagined, in contrast with the more barbarous and less artistically refined Roman Empire. This was a trope that authors would continue to use for decades.

After Maler’s visits to Piedras Negras, exploration of the ruins continued but was minimal, especially because of the site’s remoteness. Morley visited in 1914, and in 1921, a Carnegie Institute of Washington expedition consisting of Morley, Oliver Ricketson, and A. K. Rutherford visited Piedras Negras and discovered Stelae 38, 39, and 40 (Mason 1934:6; Morley 1937–38, 3:2; Stuart and Graham 2003:7). Morley published his photographs and drawings in *The Inscriptions of Petén*, his masterpiece of documentation and analysis of multiple sites in the Petén (Morley 1937–38). In this work, Morley established a chronology for the Piedras Negras sculptures that formed the basis for later epigraphic and historical study and that has held up to this day, albeit with some adjustments.

Spanish-language sources about Piedras Negras at this time were fewer, but some attention was devoted to the site. José Villacorta Calderón (1928, 1933), for example, wrote a couple of articles about Piedras Negras and its stelae. And in 1931, a Guatemalan law declared Piedras Negras and other archaeological sites to be “national monuments” of Guatemala (J. Luján Muñoz 1966:20).³

The first major archaeological excavations at Piedras Negras took place from 1931 to 1939. The project was sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (now called the “Penn Museum”) and was directed by J. Alden Mason and Linton Satterthwaite (Mason 1935:546; Mason [1933] 2005:11). The project team conducted excavation and documentation and produced a map by Fred Parris, architectural analyses by Satterthwaite, architectural reconstructions by Tatiana Proskouriakoff, description of ceramics by Mary Butler, and documentation of excavations by Mason, Satterthwaite, Frank Cresson, and others (e.g., Butler [1935] 2005; Satterthwaite [1935] 2005b, [1936] 2005c, [1943] 2005d, [1944] 2005e, [1952] 2005f).

The Pennsylvania team also made the site and its sculptures known to an even wider audience through publication of articles in the *University Museum Bulletin* and the *National Geographic Magazine* (e.g., Baker 1936; Mason 1931, 1935; Satterthwaite 1946). Several student theses arose from this project. William S. Godfrey, Jr., joined the Penn field project in 1936, 1937, and 1939 and wrote his Harvard College undergraduate thesis in 1940 on the Piedras Negras stelae (Godfrey 1940; Weeks, Hill, and Golden 2005:386). Later, William R. Coe (1959) wrote his doctoral thesis for the University of Pennsylvania on the burials and caches of Piedras Negras, based on his analysis of the excavation notes and artifacts collected in the 1930s. Several decades later, George Holley (1983) wrote his doctoral thesis for Southern Illinois University on the site’s ceramics.

The Penn Museum project also moved monuments from the site, a topic discussed further in this book’s epilogue. It sent half to Guatemala City and half to Philadelphia (Mason 1934:2, 1935:545, 552, 568; Villacorta 1933:10–18). Some of the

sculptures destined for the Penn Museum in Philadelphia were exhibited in New York and Chicago. For example, Panel 3 was displayed in two exhibitions in 1933: “American Sources of Modern Art” at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City and “A Century of Progress International Exposition” in Chicago (Cahill 1933; Mason 1935).

In the MOMA exhibition and catalog, the Piedras Negras sculptures were juxtaposed with works from other ancient American civilizations and with works of modern American art. Like Fry, Holger Cahill (1933), exhibition curator and acting director of MOMA, explicitly characterized the Maya sculptures as works of “art” and as evidence of the advanced level of the ancient Maya civilization and its artistic production. Cahill (1933:8–9) affirmed that the qualities of Piedras Negras Panel 3 demonstrated that ancient American art was not “primitive” but instead could be considered “art of high civilizations” (plate 5). He focused on the sculpture’s formal and aesthetic qualities, which offered an avenue for appreciating it. Moreover, Cahill criticized nineteenth-century archaeologists for not appreciating the aesthetics of these works or demonstrating their “art quality” to the public (Cahill 1933:6).

But even writers who typically addressed archaeological questions or ones relating to religious and cultural meaning or background highlighted the aesthetic characteristics and technical achievement of sculptures such as Piedras Negras Panel 3. Several were effusive about its formal and technical mastery and spoke of the panel in superlatives. J. Alden Mason, archaeologist and curator at the Penn Museum, stated that “Even when first seen, fragmentary and covered with dirt, it was recognized to be the finest known specimen of Maya art, which is tantamount to saying the finest known piece of aboriginal American art” (Mason 1935:548).

In the context of a continuing desire to situate the Maya among other world civilizations, a number of writers compared Maya sculptures to Classical Greek sculpture.⁴ Mason (1931:6) described Panel 3’s figural poses as “most naturalistic and Grecian in quality.” And according to Morley (1937–38, 3:229), “In balance of composition, harmony of design, interest of subject matter, brilliance of execution, it represents the supreme achievement of the American aborigine in the field of sculpture, the masterpiece of some early Maya Phidias or Praxiteles.”

These writers privileged the naturalism of ancient Maya designs, particularly in the rendering of human forms. For Mason, Morley, and Cahill, the naturalism of Maya art was in line with Classical Greek art and contrasted with what Cahill described as Aztec artists’ “tendency to the fierce, the macabre, and the terrible,” although Cahill found other qualities—such as intensity and passion—to appreciate in Aztec sculpture (Cahill 1933:13). These descriptions perpetuated the trope that the Maya were “the Greeks of the New World,” which Morley (1922:109) may have borrowed from Fry (Mary Miller, personal communication, 2010).

This emphasis on aesthetics was coupled with the suppression of evidence of warfare in order to stress the notion of the peaceful Maya, both in contrast to understandings of the Aztec civilization and akin to how Classical Greece was imagined. These ideas contributed to what would become the reigning understanding of the ancient Maya throughout the first half of the twentieth century. This model, championed especially by Morley and Thompson, espoused the idea of a peaceful Maya civilization obsessed with time and astronomy (e.g., Morley 1922:125; Thompson 1960:64; see also M. Miller 1986:7; 1993:355–56; Webster 1993). As Morley (1922:125) wrote in

1922, “the Maya inscriptions have been found to deal exclusively with the counting of time in one way or another. No grandiloquent record of earthly glory these. No bombastic chronicles of kingly pomp and pageantry, like most of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Egyptian inscriptions. On the contrary, the Maya priests would seem to have been concerned with more substantial matters, such as the observation and record of astronomical phenomena.”

This idea of the Maya as a peaceful civilization preoccupied with astronomy and time would persist for decades. For instance, in *The Ancient Maya*, Morley (1946:209) described a “professional priesthood” for the “Old Empire” Maya, whose religion was “built around the increasing importance of astronomical manifestations and the development of the calendar, chronology, and associated deities.”

The “Peaceful Maya” and the Problematic Evidence of Violence

Yet even as Morley and Thompson held on to the idea of an ancient Maya theocracy focused entirely on religion and time, other scholars recognized contrasting evidence and offered alternative hypotheses. Such evidence was found both in the images carved on the sculptures and in material evidence discovered during excavations. When the Penn Museum excavated Piedras Negras sculptures such as Panel 3 and Throne 1, they observed that their physical condition—in fragments and scattered within rooms and across temple façades—offered a material indicator of violence, and they tried to consider the source of their demise (e.g., Mason



Figure 1.2. Piedras Negras Panel 3 before restoration, limestone, ca. 782 CE. Photograph ca. 1931–33, courtesy of the Penn Museum, Image #175912.

1935:550–51, 561; Satterthwaite [1935] 2005b:71–72). Mason (1935:550) hypothesized that the city “had been sacked by enemies, or rebels, the sculptures defaced, and possibly even the buildings partly destroyed” (fig. 1.2).

Some of the images carved onto the Piedras Negras sculptures, such as Stela 12’s captive presentation, offered another challenge to the model of a peaceful theocracy. By 1913, Spinden (1913:190–91) had described Stela 12 and others as images of warfare. Morley, however, discounted Spinden’s arguments, downplaying the aspects of violence in favor of evidence for high civilization, artistry, and astronomy (Morley 1937–38, 3:96–98, 268–69).

Instead, Morley used the notion of allegory to explain the warlike images. When confronted with scenes of warriors and captives, he described them as gatherings of astronomers and priests or as allegories for astronomical phenomena. He wrote, for example, that Piedras Negras Panel 2 did not portray “a conqueror receiving the submission of vanquished rulers,” as it appeared to do, but could be “interpreted allegorically, as representing the conflict of certain heavenly bodies, . . . the triumph of one celestial body over a group of others” (Morley 1937–38, 3:96) (plate 4). In addition, he emphasized the presence of the “moon” glyph in the inscriptions as evidence for an astronomical interpretation (Morley 1937–38, 3:98), although we now know that this “moon” glyph is the syllable **ja**, functioning phonetically as a verb ending and found in other collocations.

Not surprisingly, these scholars’ conclusions were affected not only by their larger conceptions of who they hoped the ancient Maya were, but also by the kind of evidence they studied. Spinden (1913, [1916] 1977) used sculptures’ carved images as his primary evidence and argued that the sculptures bore portraits of individuals, including women, and evidence for human history and warfare. In contrast, Morley focused primarily on hieroglyphic texts that—according to what was deciphered at the time—contained only references to the calendar and time, although the historical content was hiding in plain sight. He was crippled by the state of decipherment, even though a different message was conveyed through the images, which were more transparent but deemed untrustworthy because of their allegorical or symbolic potential.

Panel 3 was a useful object for Morley and others’ focus because it did not appear to involve warfare and thus did not provide the challenge of explaining a warlike image. This may have been one of the reasons for Panel 3’s broad distribution in popular sources. Writers could focus on its extraordinary technical aspects and its content—what appeared to be a peaceful gathering around a seated leader or priest, an ideal image of a civilized society. Indeed, in its exquisite artistic design and technical skill, this subject matter correlated with the evidence for an art of “high civilization.”

But there was something missing in this interpretation. Many scholars in the first half of the twentieth century—and beyond—approached the interpretation of Maya sculptures by considering images and inscriptions at the moment of creation, without pursuing questions related to their subsequent use or material qualities such as fragmentation. By focusing on the Panel 3 image as it was when created in the eighth century, and not on its later fate, they could avoid questions of violence done to these objects.

Reconstructions of Panel 3 furthered this myopia and enabled people to focus only on the panel as it once was. Soon after its discovery, Panel 3 was consolidated, its pieces put back together, and its cracks filled with adhesive and filler. This reconstruction largely obscured the panel's ninth-century fate, as is clear in a magazine photograph of the panel as displayed in the 1933 Century of Progress International Exposition in Chicago (Mason 1935:562). In this photograph, the panel appears whole. Upon close inspection, the damage is evident, for the figures' heads are absent, but the major indices of violent smashing have been obfuscated by the object's consolidation. Moreover, the magazine's caption does not mention the damage but instead focuses on the panel's content and the skill of its execution, describing its portrayal of "a native ceremony" and praising its "perfect" body postures and proportions (Mason 1935:562).

The dissemination of images of Panel 3 in books and magazines furthered the illusion. Only reconstituted renderings of the scene, or photographs of the consolidated panel, were published. Mary Louise Baker, an artist employed by the Penn Museum, painted a black-and-white watercolor of the panel that was published in the *University Museum Bulletin* in 1936 (fig. 1.3). Baker (1936) rendered the panel as it once might have been, and she called her drawing a "restoration," implying that the object was thus returned to its original state. Her rendering of the panel shows it roughened on the edges to portray the quality of an actual stone object. Nevertheless, it has none of the cracks of the real thing, and all heads and bodies have been remade. In other words, all traces of the panel's obliteration have been carefully undone.

Baker's reconstruction portrays a scene of movement, expression, and intimacy, and her restored faces, unlike most Classic Maya images, display a range of facial expressions. Her textual description emphasizes the personalities of the various



Figure 1.3. Mary Louise Baker, "Restoration of Lintel 3 from Piedras Negras, Guatemala." Watercolor. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Image #176733.

figures, and she states that her reconstruction reveals the humor embedded in the ancient image:

The sense of humor displayed in this stone was a delightful surprise. Two of the trio, forgetful of the occasion, are entirely absorbed in their own argument, while the third, indignantly bracing himself upon out-spread feet, gives a vivacious bump with his hip (breaking his own obsequious pose for the moment), demanding attention. The seated figures are very human in manner and detail. The left dignitary gently pokes the friend in front to ask what it is all about; the friend, willing to accommodate, vainly tries to peer over the intervening mass of feathers, bracing himself on his foot, in his effort to see. (Baker 1936:121)

Calling the figures depicted on the panel “friends,” attempting to imbue them with humanity, and ascribing emotions such as contentment, complacency, distraction, and disrespect constituted a picture that was a far cry from the august, time-obsessed priests imagined by Morley and Thompson.

Baker’s illustration was reproduced in several places, including *Science News-Letter* (1936:125) and Morley’s *The Ancient Maya* (Morley 1946, plate 69b). Another artist’s reconstruction of the panel was Herbert M. Herget’s color rendering, which was published in *National Geographic Magazine* in a picture essay appropriately titled “Portraits of Ancient Mayas, a Peace-Loving People” (Herget 1935:557, plate V). These attempts to illustrate how the panel once might have appeared helped people appreciate the pictorial narrative portrayed on Panel 3. However, these attempts effaced the panel’s ninth-century history, as well.

All publications of photographs of Panel 3 were of the panel as physically consolidated (e.g., Mason 1935:562; Morley 1937–38, vol. 5, pt.1, plate 146; 1946, plate 69a). At least one photograph existed of the panel with its cracks and holes visible, but I have found no record of its publication (fig. 1.2).⁵

Captions that accompanied photographs of the consolidated panel were also misleading. When Morley reproduced a photograph of Panel 3 in *The Ancient Maya*, the label read: “Wall Panel, as found, the finest sculpture ever produced in ancient America.” The inclusion of “as found” is meant to contrast with Baker’s rendering, which appears below the photograph. But its wording denies the fact that the object had been found smashed into multiple pieces and later consolidated. Without having to explain its earlier state, Morley was free to focus on the panel’s content. As he had done in other publications, Morley particularly praises the panel’s sculptural execution (Morley 1946:368). But he barely mentions its physical condition, except to refer casually to the middle figure on the right as “almost entirely disappeared,” using the passive voice to sidestep the question of agency of the destruction.⁶

These strategies of description and illustration may be ascribed to a common interpretive approach of looking at original forms and focusing on the moment of an object’s creation. Still, we have to ask whether this was part of a larger program of Morley’s romanticization of the Maya and of his desire to keep the idea of a peaceful Maya civilization intact, ignoring indications to the contrary in the images on the Piedras Negras sculptures and the material evidence of their destruction.

Nevertheless, both Morley and Thompson eventually began to revise their understanding of Maya civilization. In *The Ancient Maya* of 1946, Morley described the figures on Stela 12 as a “*halach uinic*” seated on a throne, “two standing lords,” and

“prisoners.” Elsewhere in the book, he identified the captives as “enslaved prisoners of war” (1946:176, 367–68). Even so, he retained an overall model of a peaceful theocracy, saying that the tenor of the “Old Empire” sculptures was “generally peaceful.” Recognizing only two representations of human sacrifice, both of them at Piedras Negras (Stelae 11 and 14), Morley concluded that the Old Empire Maya religion “must have been an august, stately faith, not debased as it was in later times by wholesale human sacrifice” (1946:210–11).

Thompson, too, would begin to revise his understanding of Maya civilization, particularly considering the material evidence uncovered by the Penn Museum’s excavations. For instance, in *The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization* of 1956, Thompson acknowledged that Piedras Negras Throne 1 had been deliberately smashed, which he mused might have been the work of “invaders” or “revolting peasants.” But even while acknowledging the potential violence among the Classic Maya, he retained hope for a peaceful Classic period Maya civilization, suggesting a third possibility for the throne’s demise—that the damage “was more recent and is attributable to superstitious fear” (Thompson 1956:96).

Yet, as others have demonstrated (e.g., M. Coe 1999:167–217; M. Miller 1986:4–9; 1993:355–56; Webster 1993), the tide began to turn in the 1950s and 1960s, first with the discovery of the Bonampak murals and their grand battle scene, and second with Proskouriakoff’s definitive demonstration of historical content in the Maya inscriptions.

Historical Models and Epigraphy

It was the Piedras Negras sculptural corpus that led Proskouriakoff to craft her historical model. This hypothesis, published in a 1960 article, “Historical Implications of a Pattern of Dates at Piedras Negras, Guatemala,” would become one of the most important contributions to the study of Piedras Negras as well as of the Classic period Maya in general. In this article, Proskouriakoff (1960:455) constructed a historical narrative from the Piedras Negras sculptures and inscriptions and convincingly demonstrated that the hieroglyphs recorded dates and events from the lives of individuals and polities: in short, that the hieroglyphs recorded history.

Proskouriakoff’s argument relied not on phonetic content but on patterns she discerned in the texts and images on monument clusters. Yuri Knorosov had released a paper in Russian in 1952 and in English in 1958 arguing for syllabic phoneticism in the Maya hieroglyphs (M. Coe 1999:145–51, 162–64; Knorosov 1958), but his hypothesis was not fully accepted at the time of Proskouriakoff’s essay, nor was his system developed enough to truly crack the content of the Late Classic inscriptions. Regardless, it was not necessary to her analysis, which was based on patterns in the sculptures’ images, inscriptions, and placement, in tandem with the dates and chronology that Morley had constructed.

Proskouriakoff observed that certain glyphs appeared in similar positions on multiple monuments. She hypothesized that these glyphs were verbs and names, and she noted that comparable verb phrases associated with distinct dates appeared on monuments in different parts of the site. She saw a relationship between the appearance of the verb phrases and the monument clusters, which she conjectured related

to particular humans' biographical events such as birth, accession, and death and constituted "life histories of individuals." She proposed that these events correlated with the biographies of seven "rulers" in a "dynastic succession" (Proskouriakoff 1960:455, 464–65). The regularity with which Piedras Negras sculptures were commissioned, combined with patterns of emulation and sculptural placement or clustering, made her hypothesis possible, giving her the fuel to argue that these sculptures were about human rulers. Although scholars credit Proskouriakoff with this revelation, Godfrey's (1940) classifications and recognition of patterns in the groups of the Piedras Negras stelae may have aided her study.

Proskouriakoff's groundbreaking essay formed a significant turning point in the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphs, with Piedras Negras playing a central role. Indeed, the essay transformed Maya scholarship, forever quelling previous notions that Maya sculptures were only about deities or stargazing priests (M. Coe 1999:167–84). In fact, Thompson stated in his 1972 revision of *Maya Hieroglyphic Writing* that Proskouriakoff's "work has shown that the generally held view, to which I subscribed . . . regarding the impersonality of the texts on Maya stelae is completely mistaken" (Thompson 1972:v).

Scholars have made vast progress in the phonetic decipherment of the hieroglyphs in the five decades since Proskouriakoff's 1960 essay, yet her model remains largely sound (M. Coe 1999; Houston 2000; Stuart 1992). Phonetic decipherments have confirmed and expanded upon her hypothesis about the Piedras Negras dynasts, with some adjustments, including additions of earlier rulers and the replacement of her "Ruler 6" with another historical individual (see, e.g., Houston 1983; Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Martin and Grube 2008:139–53).

Yet Proskouriakoff's conclusions about the historical content of Piedras Negras sculptures were revelatory for reasons far beyond the identification of the polity's rulers, for they opened a new way to look at Maya sculpture. Many studies since that time have discovered a remarkable array of historical persons, polities, and events inscribed on ancient sculptures and other media, and Mayanists have raced to decipher more hieroglyphs and draw out historical narratives from these monuments (e.g., Houston 1983; Martin and Grube 2008; Schele 1991; Schele and Freidel 1990; Stuart 1995, 2007a). New decipherments have spurred further archaeological excavations, and, in turn, new discoveries from excavations have contributed to more decipherments (e.g., Fash 1998:225; [1991] 2001; Stuart 1992).

These epigraphic studies have been vital to our ever-expanding knowledge of the Classic period Maya, for now we have historical contexts in which to place the ancient portraits, sculptures, buildings, and portable objects such as ceramic vessels and jadeite costume elements that bear texts naming their owners. The skeletons buried in Maya buildings have become kings and queens with identifiable names, and we even have names of ancient painters and carvers. Furthermore, studies have revealed that the ancient Maya were people cognizant of their own history, having recorded their present and past exploits in a variety of media. Our increased understanding of what the ancient Maya themselves wrote has opened new avenues of investigation, both about Maya sculptures and the larger body of Maya art and culture.

A number of scholars have contributed to the decipherment and interpretation of the Piedras Negras hieroglyphic texts. After Morley and Proskouriakoff, described

above, other significant epigraphic contributions have been made by Stephen Houston (Houston 1983; Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008), Sarah Jackson (2005), Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube (2000, 2008), David Stuart (1985, 1998b, 2004, 2007b), Stefanie Teufel (2004), and Marc Zender (2002). These studies have revealed more historical details of the actions of rulers and other people in the Yokib polity. Some have also integrated these details with historical records from other sites to re-construct inter-polity communication, alliance, hierarchies, and warfare (see Freidel and Schele 1990; Marcus 1976; P. Mathews 1988; Schele 1991).

Iconography

Another strand in Maya historiography has been the identification and interpretation of the images carved on sculptures, painted on vessels and walls, or inscribed in other media. Iconographic interpretation has a long history in Mesoamerican studies, with its roots in the work of Eduard Seler and Herbert Spinden and related to iconographic and iconological studies of Western art. Notable iconographic studies about or relating to the Piedras Negras monuments are those by Flora Clancy (2009), Mary Miller (1999), John Montgomery (1995), Andrea Stone (1989), David Stuart (2000, 2005:89), and Karl Taube (1988a). Their studies have identified many elements of these complex images, including particular deities, types of headdresses, supernatural birds, and ritual paraphernalia, among other elements. They also have attempted to relate these elements to mythology, ceremonial practice, and other aspects of ancient Maya society.

One recent study devoted to the Piedras Negras sculptures is Clancy's *The Monuments of Piedras Negras, an Ancient Maya City* (2009). Her book is structured by chronology, with a chapter on each ruler and the sculptures from each reign, and she describes all of the sculptures' images and texts. Clancy closely examines the images, identifying iconographic elements and their possible sources in Preclassic Maya and Olmec art and in other Classic period Maya images. Clancy also combines her interpretations of the images with epigraphic decipherments to contextualize the monuments within the historical narratives of the Yokib polity.

Also important to the study of Piedras Negras sculptures have been analyses of their forms. One contribution is John Montgomery's (1995) master's thesis, in which he examines the individual signatures on the monuments of K'inich Yat Ahk II in relation to visual evidence of the hands that sculpted them.

Interdisciplinary Excavations

In addition to the more focused studies, also fruitful have been collaborative, interdisciplinary approaches in which epigraphic, iconographic, and material evidence are brought together, particularly in the context of archaeological projects. After the University of Pennsylvania's large-scale excavations in the 1930s, the second major archaeological project at Piedras Negras was the Piedras Negras Archaeological Project (PNAP), a joint project led by Stephen Houston and Héctor Escobedo from 1997 to 2000 and in 2005. The interdisciplinary project involved archaeologists, physical anthropologists, epigraphers, geologists, art historians, and more; research topics were wide-ranging and looked at various levels of society, including temples

and palaces in the site center, architectural complexes of secondary nobles on the edges of the site center, and more humble residences on the periphery.

Epigraphic decipherments provided the motivation for some of the excavations. For example, because the inscriptions on the Piedras Negras carved panels narrate censuring events in rulers' burial hills, one of the project's many research goals was to seek these tombs. During their search, archaeologists discovered Burial 13 at the base of Structure O-13, which they posit is Itzam K'an Ahk II's tomb (Barrientos, Escobedo, and Houston 1997:8; Escobedo 2004; Escobedo and Alvarado 1998:13; Houston et al. 1999; Houston, Escobedo, Forsyth, et al. 1998:18–19; Wright 1997:214; see also chapters 3 and 4, this book). The excavation of this tomb and interpretation of the data in concert with pictorial and epigraphic evidence revealed a wealth of information about Classic period burials, funerary practices, and later commemorative ceremonies to ancestors.

This project produced a wealth of data published in reports submitted to Guatemala's Institute of Anthropology and History (IDAEH). In addition, a number of articles, dissertations, and books came out of the project; they include the dissertations of Mark Child (2006), James Fitzsimmons (2002), Charles Golden (2002), Zachary Hruby (2006), Sarah Jackson (2005), Arturo René Muñoz (2006), Zachary Nelson (2005), and Andrew Scherer (2004), as well as a book by Fitzsimmons (2009) and another book, in progress, coauthored by Houston, Escobedo, and David Webster (2008).

Site Planning, Landscape, and Processions

Some studies of Classic period Maya cities, including Piedras Negras, have investigated site planning and architectural and sculptural alignments and vistas in relation to questions of cosmology, performance, and processions. Examining relationships among sculptures, buildings, and the natural environment is indeed crucial to the effort to reconstruct and conceptualize possible uses and experiences of sculptures and their ambient space.

Although I wrote most of this book without knowing about Horst Hartung's work on the alignment of Piedras Negras sculptures, I subsequently discovered his 1980 and 1984 essays in which he examined the placement of Piedras Negras sculptures in relation to the site plan. Hartung found alignments among the monuments, which he then associated with Proskouriakoff's discoveries of historical records at Piedras Negras. As I have done, Hartung sought correlations between the images and texts on monuments and their physical orientations, and he argued for direct alignments among stelae in different parts of the site. His is an important contribution because of the attempt to think about monuments spatially and connect spatial alignments to the historical accounts of the Piedras Negras dynasts (Hartung 1980:212).

However, the principal problem with his argument is that he relied on the site map and drew lines between sculptures in the form of dots on the flat plane of the twentieth-century map. Indeed, it appears that he did not consider exactly which directions the stelae carvings face or how this relates to patterns of movement, lines of vision, or barriers between them in the form of landscape or buildings.

The lines on his maps show some connections that may indeed correspond to those of lived experience. One acceptable proposition may be the line drawn across

several rulers' stelae in the West Group: Ruler 2's Stela 38, Ruler 3's Stelae 1–8, and Ruler 4's Stela 11 (Hartung 1984:225). Nevertheless, I question whether many of the other claimed connections were functional or relevant to ancient sculptors and viewers. For instance, he connected monument alignments with building doorways and posited that they were meaningful. One example is a line crossing Stelae 26 and 31 and the central doorway of Structure R-9 in the South Group (Hartung 1980:213). But he did not take into account the direction the monuments face, nor did he consider differences in elevation of the stelae and the building or its doorway.⁷

In contrast, the sculptural alignments discussed in this book (detailed in chapter 3) take into account where the stelae face and how humans would have experienced them in the physical environment of the city. Some of the stelae are in physical or visual alignment. Others are linked by processional causeways; performances along them created ligatures among the monuments that were significant and meaningful in the ancient past.

My studies of these processional causeways rely on work from the late 1990s by the PNAP, specifically a report by Tomás Barrientos (1997), who makes note of the causeway linking the South Group Court to the East Group Plaza. Barrientos's excavations in the East Group Plaza and subsequent PNAP excavations in the West Group Plaza demonstrated that the creation and elaboration of these causeways, which were made up of wide, unobstructed pathways and grand stone stairways, were part of a substantial reconfiguration of the site in the late seventh and early eighth centuries CE that Houston and Escobedo call the "Great Shift" (Houston 2004:274–76; Houston and Escobedo 2001:613–14). The excavations and extensive analysis of the data collected by the PNAP provide the tools to allow us to consider the development and use of the causeways in relation to changing patterns in the use and experience of sculptures over time.

Rosemary Joyce (1992) has also examined the topic of processions and rituals at Piedras Negras, particularly at Structure O-13, where, she argues, buried caches create a ceremonial pathway up the pyramid's stairway that culminates in the back room of the shrine. In chapters 3 and 4, I further expand on Joyce's model, using data from the archaeological excavations of the 1930s and the late 1990s. In addition, I examine other Piedras Negras pyramids for comparable ceremonial pathways and consider the vertical pathways in conjunction with the processional causeways that link architectural groups and sculptures.

Finally, Adam Herring (2005:188, 196–98, 202–204) also has studied the sculpture of Piedras Negras in relation to pathways and what he calls "major routes of movement" through the site, considering in particular how a human body would move through the landscape and built environment and the vistas that arise with this movement, primarily for Structure O-13 and the East Group Plaza. Some of my analyses of sculptural placement in chapter 3 echo Herring's observations and also address how the content of the carvings articulates with those routes. I further examine how such pathways integrate with the performances that individual sculptures and the physical relationships among them inspire, arguing that the sculptures' forms, carvings, placement, and their performance come together and are integrated in these objects and human experience of them.

Complementing this line of inquiry are studies of performance and dance in relation to architecture elsewhere in the Maya region. For example, in their analysis of

Cerros Structure 5C-2nd, Linda Schele and David Freidel (1990) proposed a specific route for a ruler or another performer to move on the temple's stairs, terraces, and superstructure during a procession or dance; they posited an audience watching from the plaza below. Furthermore, because the walls of the superstructure require someone to move in a clockwise or counterclockwise direction to enter or leave the inner sanctum, they hypothesized that a performance involving movement in or out of this shrine was related to the sun's apparent movement (Schele and Freidel 1990:105–11).

In addition, Kathryn Reese-Taylor (2002) examined site plans and architectural forms at Cerros, Uaxactún, and Tikal and posited various shapes of performance, including counterclockwise circumambulation of architectural complexes at these sites. She compared these shapes to the diversity of processional forms and ritual circuits of Maya dancers in multiple communities in the twentieth century.

Another related approach is that of Mary Miller (2002), who has addressed the viewers' potential experience of rooms with painted murals in Bonampak Structure 1. By considering the paintings in relation to architecture and to hypothetical human bodies in those spaces, she considers what a person would see while moving through the space. In addition, she addresses how people might have viewed other people interacting with the paintings in the architectural space, and the possible social implications of those vistas.

Also noteworthy is Looper's recent book, *To Be Like Gods: Dance in Maya Civilization* (2009), which includes several case studies of how dance and performance activated ancient Maya sculpture and architecture. Looper also offers productive, interdisciplinary investigations of ancient Maya representations and conceptions of dance. Looper's work builds on other analyses of Maya performance, procession, and dance (e.g., Grube 1992a; Houston 2006; Inomata 2006; Looper 2001), in addition to anthropological and art historical studies of religion, ritual, and performance. These investigations, as well the current book, delve into the interrelation of human bodies with monuments, buildings, and landscapes. Such studies, concerned with human perception of objects, buildings, and space, draw implicitly or explicitly from phenomenology as it applies to the study of objects and landscapes (e.g., Looper 2009:153–54; Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2003; Potts 2000).

At the same time, the spaces and places of these interactions and experiences need not be considered static or without meaning or memory. One model is Christopher Tilley's study of the phenomenology of landscape in Neolithic southern Wales and England. Tilley (1994) proposes a consideration of "space as a medium rather than a container for action, something that is involved in action and cannot be divorced from it. As such, space does not and cannot exist apart from the events and activities within which it is implicated" (Tilley 1994:11). Similarly, Travis Stanton and Aline Magnoni (2008) have examined how Classic period Maya people used, reused, and transformed places over time. They emphasize the association among ancestors, rituals, and place in the creation and maintenance of group identity. They further contend that rituals of group identity cannot be "easily disassociated from the place" (2008:14), for the memories of these rites and other actions affect how a place is perceived and add layers of meaning to that place.

Along these lines, I examine how memory was mapped onto the landscape and across the causeways that connected the Piedras Negras architectural groups and

monumental sculptures. The arrangement of sculptures in those groups required people to walk along the causeways to see and connect the monuments and the historical narratives inscribed on and embodied by them. But the human traversal of the causeways, plazas, and buildings in those architectural groups changed the meaning of those places, transforming them into routes of memory and performance and influencing the later creation of sculptures and buildings.

Sculptural Animation and Agency

After the advances in decipherment opened a window into the realms of ancient Maya history and politics, much subsequent scholarship was devoted to reconstructing the histories narrated in the hieroglyphs carved onto Maya stone sculptures. However, in 1996, Stuart initiated another line of inquiry, further developed by Houston, Taube, and Elizabeth Newsome, that changed the discourse from inquiry into the historical and political content of the carvings to an exploration of the sculptures as religious objects or entities whose creation and dedication were integral to ceremonies related to the commemoration of time and world renewal (e.g., Houston and Stuart 1998; Houston, Stuart, and Taube 2006; Newsome 1998; Stuart 1996). This work was as important in provoking a sea change in the understanding of ancient Maya sculptures as Proskouriakoff's historical model was in the 1960s.

As Stuart (1996) contends, the dedication of the objects may have had as much significance to the ancient Maya as the information carved on their surfaces. He further proposes that the dedication ceremonies may have been a primary reason for making these monuments. In particular, he observes that dedicatory texts are the most common of all Maya inscriptions across multiple media. Indeed, many stelae's first phrases are dedication statements; they can take up a large part of the monument's text. These inscriptions, he affirms, were "often aimed to explain and contextualize the very stones upon which they were inscribed" (Stuart 1996:154).

Newsome, too, has highlighted the religious purposes of the production and dedication of ancient stelae. She discusses their relation to colonial-period calendrical rites and argues that the raising of each stela commemorated the act of planting stones at the time of "creation," a mythological event narrated on Quiriguá Stela C, Piedras Negras Altar 1, Cobá Stela 1, and other stone sculptures and ceramic vessels. The date of this creation is 4 Ajaw 8 Kumku, or 13.0.0.0.0, and it corresponds with 8 September 3114 BCE in the Julian calendar or 13 August 3114 BCE in the Gregorian calendar. It was the zero date from which events were tracked in the Long Count, and it was a moment of ultimate world renewal, when the three stones were planted and the gods were placed in order (Looper 2003:10–12; Newsome 1998, 2001:8–10; Schele, Freidel, and Parker 1993, chap. 2). The dedication of stelae and other monuments such as altars commemorated creation and brought about renewal in emulation of the primordial acts of creation.

Dedication ceremonies presumably were elaborate affairs, and we have some clues as to what happened during these rites. Stuart has suggested that the sculptures were wrapped in cloth before or during their dedication. In particular, he observes that one of the common verbs used in dedication phrases for stelae is *k'al tuun*, or stone-binding (Stuart 1996:154–57); it is the most commonly used phrase for monument dedication at Piedras Negras.



Figure 1.4. Central medallion of a carved peccary skull, Copán Tomb 1, showing two figures seated on either side of a wrapped stela and altar. Drawing by Barbara Fash. Courtesy of Barbara Fash.

Stuart suggests that the stone-binding may refer to the wrapping of the stone with cloth, perhaps in order to help contain its sacred essence (Stuart 1996:156–60). He points to several ancient depictions of stelae and altars wrapped with cloth. For example, in the image incised into the peccary skull from Copán Tomb 1, two figures sit on either side of a vertical, stela-shaped element with stone markings; across this stela are several twisted bands, showing it to be tied or wrapped in cloth, and the text above the stela narrates a stone-binding on a period ending (fig. 1.4). The unwrapping of the stone in the dedication ceremony likely had a performative aspect; as the stone was unwrapped, its carved or colored surfaces were revealed.

Ancient depictions of people making offerings in front of stelae and altars appear on a few monuments, such as the upper register of Caracol Stela 15. The offerings most likely consisted of blood and incense, though several stelae at Piedras Negras show sacrificed humans at the base of the ruler's scaffold on the period ending. In addition, chanting or singing undoubtedly accompanied these dedication ceremonies. Some images depict or make reference to dancing, and as argued in chapter 2, the composition of the texts on many Piedras Negras

sculptures would have guided people to move around them in circular paths, which I hypothesize may have been a fundamental part of their ceremonial activation. With such activities as unwrapping, singing, chanting, dancing, burning of incense, and offering of blood, these ceremonies would have stimulated multiple senses for both ritual participants and witnesses.

Deities and ancestors also were invoked in these dedications. Some texts mention the person dedicating the stone in the company of one or more deities, and the portrayal of ancestors floating above kings on Early Classic stelae may show they were integral to the consecration rituals. The transformation of these stelae thus was realized through human agency in concert with the divine.

One fruitful source of analogy is Diego de Landa's sixteenth-century *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán*, for Landa includes descriptions of the making and consecration of religious idols or effigies by the Yucatec Maya. According to Landa and his informants, the month of Mol—"or another month if the priest told them it was suitable"—was the time to renew "idols" of wood (Tozzer 1941:159, 161). Before making the idols, which were requested by an owner, the priests and workers had to fast, be abstinent, and follow important procedures. The process of making them was considered to be full of danger, especially if the proper ritual procedures were not followed (Tozzer 1941:161). The choice of materials was important, and Landa says the owner went into the forest to find the wood. They were to choose cedar, and Alfred Tozzer (1941:160n824) notes that the Yucatec Maya name for cedar is *k'uh che* (sacred tree); the material thus was considered inherently sacred even before selection, carving, or consecration.

The place where the idol was made was also important, for the workers had to build a special hut of straw that was “fenced in, where they put the wood and a great urn in which to place the idols and to keep them there under cover, while they were making them” (Tozzer 1941:160). In this hut they gathered the tools they needed for sculpting the idols and the items needed for ceremony, including incense. Landa also notes that while making the idols, the priest, the *chacs* (assistants who symbolized rain gods), and the workers burned incense and drew blood from their ears with which they anointed the idols (Tozzer 1941:160). Last, Landa describes that once the idol was finished, it was removed from the hut, and the priest performed a ceremony to “bless” the idol “with great solemnity and plenty of fervent prayers,” and that they wrapped the idols in cloth and placed them in a basket to give to the owner (Tozzer 1941:160–61).

It is clear that the Yucatec Maya considered the process of making these deity effigies a serious and sacred act, in which the makers had to be isolated and had to follow prescribed rules and make offerings to the gods while working. After the idol was made, and before it was given to the owner, the priests blessed it. Although not explicitly articulated, the purpose of this blessing may have been to activate or transform the man-made object into something divine, and these ceremonial acts—both during the carving and afterward—undoubtedly were a crucial part of the process of making the gods. Landa mentions that one of the reasons they revered these idols was “on account of what they represented, and because they had made them with so many ceremonies” (Tozzer 1941:110). These series of rites, involving a combination of human agency in concert with divine forces, served to transform the wood effigies into potent entities.

Archaeological data at Piedras Negras—and from across the Maya realm—provide evidence of intense ceremonial engagement with stone sculptures upon their planting in the ground, particularly in the offering of perishable and non-perishable materials that were set in caches beneath altars or in the cists into which the stelae were inserted. These offerings may have been deposited during dedication ceremonies or, for sculptures that were carved in situ, at an earlier point in the sculpture’s facture. The deposition of the cache likely was one of multiple rites in the creation and consecration of these monuments.

At Piedras Negras, caches were deposited beneath stelae, tabletop altars, column altars, and thrones, though not every monument had an associated cache. The caches contained a variety of items, including drum-shaped portable altars, incense burners, lidded ceramic bowls holding eccentric flints and obsidians, obsidian blades, shells, stingray spines for bloodletting, and other items (W. Coe 1959).

At least one of Itzam K’an Ahk I’s stelae, Stela 39, from 677 CE, was associated with a cache. Consisting of a lidded ceramic bowl with three eccentric flints and three eccentric obsidians, incised pieces of shell, and land snail shells, its form and contents are comparable to caches placed in Piedras Negras buildings. Most building caches contained multiple eccentrics made of flint or obsidian; they often had pieces of jadeite or shell, too (W. Coe 1959:93, 104–105).

K’inich Yo’näl Ahk II’s Stelae 6 and 8 also had offerings of lidded ceramic bowls holding eccentric flints and obsidians. In addition, beneath his Altar 1 was another lidded ceramic bowl, but its contents were richer and more diverse, with an eccentric flint, flint flakes, pieces of jadeite and crystalline hematite, shell figurines,

cut *Spondylus* shell pieces, a fossil gastropod, clamshell fragments, bird and animal bones, and five stingray spines, both worked and unworked (W. Coe 1959:89–90). This cache was more elaborate and diverse than many other caches at the site, and its abundance likely was because of the import of the celebration of the 9.13.0.0.0 (692 CE) period ending.

In addition to holding bloodletting implements, some caches associated with the stelae of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II and Itzam K'an Ahk II held altars and incense burners, items normally used in ceremonial offerings. In particular, cached at the base of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Stela 8 and Itzam K'an Ahk II's Stelae 9 and 11 were drum-shaped portable stone altars (W. Coe 1959:89–90; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:25) (see figs. 5.13, 5.14). The altar cached with Stela 9 had scratches on it, which Satterthwaite suggested were from cutting, possibly from ceremonial sacrifices. Stela 9's cist also contained a ceramic incense burner decorated with spikes (W. Coe 1959:90; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:25; [1936] 2005c:150). These altars and the incense burner may have been used for ceremonial offerings and then cached with the stelae as part of their dedication. No caches were found with any of K'inich Yat Ahk II's stelae, but his throne—Throne 1, from 785 CE—had a cache interred beneath it consisting of a lidded ceramic jar with offerings inside, including flint chips, shells, and stingray spine fragments (W. Coe 1959:90–91). This cache was similar to others deposited beneath earlier monuments and in buildings.

Finally, even some plain monuments—including a monumental altar and many smaller column altars—had caches buried beneath them. For example, Altar 5, a plain table altar on the central axis of Structure O-13, presumably from the reign of Ruler 5, 6, or 7, had an associated cache containing multiple eccentric flints and obsidians (W. Coe 1959:82). In addition, caches were buried under the plain stone column altars that were set in front of pyramids, on stairways, and in shrines on top of pyramids. The caches beneath the column altars of Structures R-9, K-5, and J-29, for example, included the same types of items found in building caches and other sculptural caches, including eccentric flints and obsidians, blades, shells, and stingray spines, usually inside a ceramic vessel (see W. Coe 1959:92–94, 96). These altars often had other offerings and signs of burning on and around them (W. Coe 1959:90, 93–94; Mason, n.d.b, 27, 42, 48; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:24).

The caches deposited beneath stone monuments and in buildings were offerings to those structures and were the remains of ceremonial practice. Their deposition made the ephemeral ceremonies permanent, and they continued to function as active offerings to the monuments or buildings where they were dedicated. Offerings found with an array of sculptural types indicate that each type—regardless of its size and whether or not it was carved—was dedicated amid offering ceremonies, presumably during which time the sculpture was ritually activated. This pattern provides another indication that Classic Maya stone monuments were significant for reasons beyond what was carved on them, for they were sacred entities whose production and dedication were fundamental parts of religious practice.

This is not to underplay the significance of the images of rulers carved onto many Classic period stelae. Stuart, Houston, and Taube contend that these images did not simply represent these persons but embodied them and the rituals shown in the scenes, and that the figural carvings of rulers on stelae functioned as doubles of

royal bodies. Using evidence such as the appearance of the glyph *baaj* (self or head) in the captioning of Maya images, as well as making comparisons with understandings of Mexica practices, they have proposed that part of the essence or soul of the person was transferred into the image (Houston and Stuart 1998; Houston, Stuart, and Taube 2006:57–101; Stuart 1996). Furthermore, Houston and Stuart (1998:90) explain the process of this transference of essence through a conceptualization of “personhood” that is not limited to the physical human body but can be transferred to objects and representations. These substitutes allowed rulers—both alive and dead—to be eternally and multiply available for supplication and veneration (Houston, Stuart, and Taube 2006:77–78). In other words, they suggest that stelae were not inanimate objects, but embodiments of divine rulers that contained and were enlivened by parts of those rulers’ souls. Moreover, Houston, Stuart, and Taube (2006:76) propose that it was the resulting living nature of the stone sculptures that allowed humans and sculptures to interact.

This conceptualization fits with what we know about images of rulers and deities for civilizations such as ancient Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt, and medieval India, among others. Irene Winter (1992), Lynn Meskell (2004), and Richard Davis (1997:17–37), for example, have described cases of sculptures as living manifestations of humans or deities, and of objects understood to be animate or otherwise imbued with power or agency. There are several important factors in these understandings. The first is the idea that things can be animate, whether inherently animate or made animate, and must be washed, fed, given offerings, and otherwise treated as if they were persons or divine entities. In cases in which an object is made animate or divine, it is often imperative to show how this transformation takes place.

Across cultures, agency for transforming the made thing into an animate or divine entity is often shared between humans and the divine. Human actions, for instance, contribute to preparing the object to receive the divine essence. They make and prepare the thing and invite the divine to enter it, but then agency shifts to the divine. In some explanations, the object is understood as a vessel and the animation is comparable to a life force entering the vessel of a human body. Through these acts, the thing is transformed, becomes empowered, and changes how humans interact with it, requiring, for example, that humans feed, bathe, pay reverence, and make offerings to it. Depending on the culture, this pertains to both iconic objects—those with an image of a person, creature, or divinity—and to aniconic objects, such as a stone or even a house.

Winter, for example, has discussed the processes of animation for ancient Mesopotamian sculptures, particularly of royal images from the time of the ruler Gudea of Lagash, circa 2100–2000 BCE, which can be considered as “manifestations” of divine rulers. These royal images were animated and beseeched to communicate with deities on behalf of worshipers, and they were themselves worshiped, with priests attending to them, performing ceremonies to them, and washing and feeding them. Winter says that they treated the image “as a living person,” and she notes that the rhetoric of both Sumerian and Assyrian inscriptions maintains that the statues were considered to have been “‘born’ in heaven.” Indeed, although the statue might be made by humans on earth, it had to be “perfected” through ritual, which included the ceremony of the opening of the eyes and the mouth (Winter 1992:15–16, 23, 30).

Another key aspect of the rhetoric of animation rites is the idea that the essence of the deity is invoked to enter the image, specifically through a “plea directed to the image itself not to *stay* in heaven, but to ‘enter the form’” (Winter 1992:23). The essence of the deity, invoked by human action, thus moved into the form of the image and changed it from a made thing to a divine, living entity.

Winter (1992:34) ascribes importance to the form of the image in becoming a substitute for a ruler, particularly the “careful constructedness according to appropriate physical form.” She notes that although these Mesopotamian statues were not true portraits, sculptors connected the statues to the person by being true to certain physical features, such as a chin with a particular shape, or broadness of the face. She calls these “signature elements” that “signal salient aspects of the individual and thus are tied to his or her person” (Winter 1992:37n14). The combination of constructedness and the rituals of consecration not only animate the material but also create a royal image that “stands as the absolute embodiment of the ruler” (Winter 1992:34).

Davis (1997:21) describes the transformation of an object of human facture into a divine form for eleventh-century south Indian stone *linga* and bronze images of Śiva, which he describes as “most fundamentally living divine beings.” This transformation requires care in the crafting of the thing and the performance of ceremonial rites during its making and ritual establishment, which he defines as “the ritual program by which Indian temple images are brought to life.” As with ancient Mesopotamia, agency in this transformation is shared between humans and the divine (R. Davis 1997:33). Regarding the ritual procedures to animate it, Davis notes a further step, for “the object that is infused or identical with God cannot be composed of ordinary matter; it must undergo a transubstantiation.” In addition, the metaphor for transformation of the thing into a divine entity is akin to the animation of a human body. Davis (1997:34) writes that medieval Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva texts “often employ the analogy of a transmigrating soul entering a human body” to bring it to life, and he explains that this entering force can be referred to as a “soul (*ātman*), animating spirit (*jīva*), life breath (*prāṇa*), consciousness (*cetana*), or divine energy (*śakti*).”

Davis (1997:34–37) explains that rites of establishment were not sudden but gradual and involved various phases, and that each step, beginning with choosing the materials and crafting the thing, was accompanied by ceremonial rites and recitations that made the thing “fit for divine entry.” Key here are the gradual process and the multiple steps required for its consecration, but also important is the idea that the material was perceived to be special in the first place and was “treated as a deity in the making” even before the fabrication began. Although material and crafting were ascribed importance, achieving verisimilitude was not essential for animation, for according to Davis (1997:21), what was central to an icon’s identity was “the divine presence that was invoked into it through ritual procedures and came to animate it.” Davis (1997:35–36) also describes rites of establishment that are similar to those of Mesopotamia in how a body was treated, that is, opening the eyes and washing, purifying, and dressing the image.

Meskel (2004:252) has addressed questions of object animation and agency in ancient Egypt, particularly regarding cult statues placed in shrines. Meskel is also interested in the process of transforming a made thing into a divine entity. Meskel (2004:249) uses as a conceptual framework a four-stage process outlined

by Roy Ellen (1988:219) for what have been defined as “fetishes” for other cultures. The four stages in this process are concretization, animation, conflation, and ambiguity: “*concretization*, where abstraction assumes concrete, effective entities; *animation*, where the qualities of living organisms are imputed to objects, usually anthropomorphic; *conflation*, where signifier and signified, content and form, destabilize one another; *ambiguity*, where control of the object by the person and of the person by the object is unclear.” Meskell (2004:249) also cites the importance of ongoing ritual action in the maintenance of the animated thing or entity. In fact, she notes that the Egyptian term for sculptor was “*he who keeps alive*,” a term that, she affirms, “underscores the significance of the image as a living materiality.”

These cross-cultural understandings of animation taking place through ceremonial acts may help us to theorize the evidence relating to Maya monumental stone sculpture. For example, the stages outlined by Ellen and Meskell may apply to the evidence we have for Maya sculptures, starting with their making, or “concretization,” and then their “animation” through dedication ceremonies, when the objects were imbued with a vital essence. If the monument was of a ruler, the object might have been imbued with part of his soul, and there was a “conflation” of the ruler and the sculptural form that embodied him. Houston, Stuart, and Taube (2006:74) hypothesize that resemblance was an essential part of the transfer of a ruler’s essence into a sculptural form: “the act of carving, modeling, or painting creates a surface that resembles the original and yet transfers a vital charge, a living spark, of that original.” This notion is comparable to Winter’s (1992:34) description of the importance of the “careful constructedness according to appropriate physical form” for the animation of Mesopotamian statues that became the embodiments of rulers. Yet, as Winter (1992:37n14) observes, this likeness did not depend on “true portraiture” but could be achieved through the use of “signature elements” that connected a person with an image.

The concept of signature elements may be appropriate for the Classic period Maya as well. Well-known examples are the diagnostic facial profiles for the Palenque rulers K’inich Janaab Pakal and K’inich Kan Bahlam; distinctive elements in their profiles convey who they were even though much of their representations were idealized. Through these signature elements, the person was recalled to a degree that allowed the entrance of the vital essence of the person (or divinity) into the object.

Finally, there is the question of “ambiguity.” As discussed in the second half of this book, how the Classic period Maya treated these monuments over time suggests that there was some ambiguity in who or what had agency in these relationships. The monuments, whether because of their animation, their insistent materiality (to use one of Alex Pott’s phrases [2000:xii]), or their connections to ancestors, appear to have encouraged—if not demanded—reverence, dialogue, or certain manners of treatment, even many years after they were created.

At the same time, we must also keep open the possibility that, for the Classic period Maya at Piedras Negras, the material was considered sacred or otherwise potent even before carving or dedication, as with the sixteenth-century wooden effigies of the Yucatec Maya described by Landa and Tozzer (1941:160n824) or the medieval Indian images discussed by Davis (1997:33–34). In other words, there may have been ambiguity in the relationship between people and these materials and things from the very beginning.

Conclusion

Ancient Maya monumental sculptures worked both as material things and as animate entities, engaging the bodies of the people who approached them. Yet their carved texts and images and the information they presented, whether about the present or the past, clearly were important to the meaning and function of these monuments as well. The histories inscribed on these monuments were intertwined with their own form and materiality.

Viewers did not necessarily need to understand text or image in order to engage with these sculptures, though if they—either as individual viewers or as part of an audience for a recitation of these sculptures' texts—did understand them, there were opportunities for additional kinds of engagement beyond the physical experience with sculptures as sacred objects or entities. In addition to physical or spiritual engagement with these monuments, viewers and performers could use the monuments to engage in the creation and remembrance of historical discourse. As indicated by the addition of new sculptures in alignment with older monuments, the relocation of older monuments, and suggestions of the varied reception and performance of these sculptures over time, this discourse was not fixed, but fluid. Furthermore, with the concept of recitation literacy and the performance of sculptures, discussed in more detail in chapters 2 and 3, we add a new dimension to our understanding of the viewing and experience of sculptures and construct a model of engagement with sculptures that explores the roles of both makers and viewers in the production of meaning.

Sculptural Bodies and Sacred Movement

The physical forms of Piedras Negras sculptures invited people to interact with them. A sculpture's shape and size and the location of its carvings encouraged people to move toward and around it and to engage not only with the carved images and texts but also with the object and who or what it embodied. Some monuments' carved designs created illusions of three-dimensional space that both intersected with the ambient space and situated an observer's body in relation to the monument. Sculptures also shaped relationships between viewers and the persons depicted on or embodied by the carved images. Buildings at Piedras Negras further mediated how sculptures were experienced, and in turn, sculptures encouraged movement such as circumambulation and processions up buildings. This chapter explores those qualities of sculptures and buildings and addresses how they pertain to Classic period Maya religion, ceremonialism, and politics.

Piedras Negras Stela 3: People, Space, and Experience

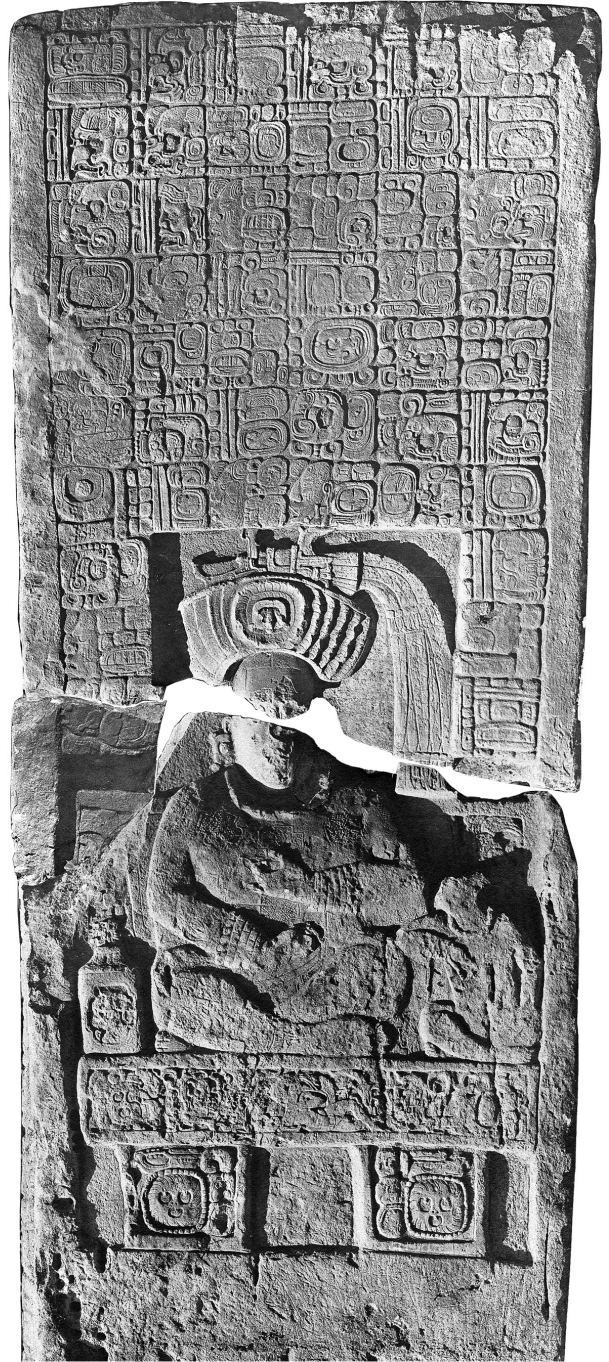
An examination of Stela 3, a monument of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II from 711 CE, is a good place to begin to address the visual, material, and symbolic aspects of Piedras Negras monumental stone sculptures. The physical qualities of the stone, the content and placement of its carved texts and images, and its location at the edge of the Acropolis offer insight into how the Late Classic Maya may have seen and experienced this sculpture.

On 1 December 711 CE, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II and his queen, Lady K'atun Ajaw, marked the ending of the fourteenth k'atun of the ninth bak'tun (9.14.0.0.0) amid what was certainly a grand festival of community celebration and world renewal. Stela 3 was carved from a huge mass of rock; the stela measured 4.14 meters tall, 1.31 meters wide, and 43 centimeters thick. It was set in a line with other stelae from K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's reign on the J-1 platform at the edge of the Acropolis.¹ This platform was 5.4 meters above the West Group Plaza (Maler 1901:47–48; Morley 1938, 3:151–52; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:25).

Stela 3 was similar to others dedicated in earlier k'atuns, but it was unusual because it portrayed not only the divine king but also his queen and their daughter, Lady Juun Tahn Ahk (fig. 2.1). On the stela's front was an image of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II. Although most of this carving was eroded by the time Maler discovered it in 1895, traces of the standing king's image remained (Maler 1901:46). The back had been protected from weathering, and the image of Lady K'atun Ajaw and Lady Juun



a.



b.

Figure 2.1. Front and back, Piedras Negras Stela 3, limestone, 711 CE. a. Photograph of front courtesy of the Penn Museum, Image #15936. b. Photograph of back by Teobert Maler, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

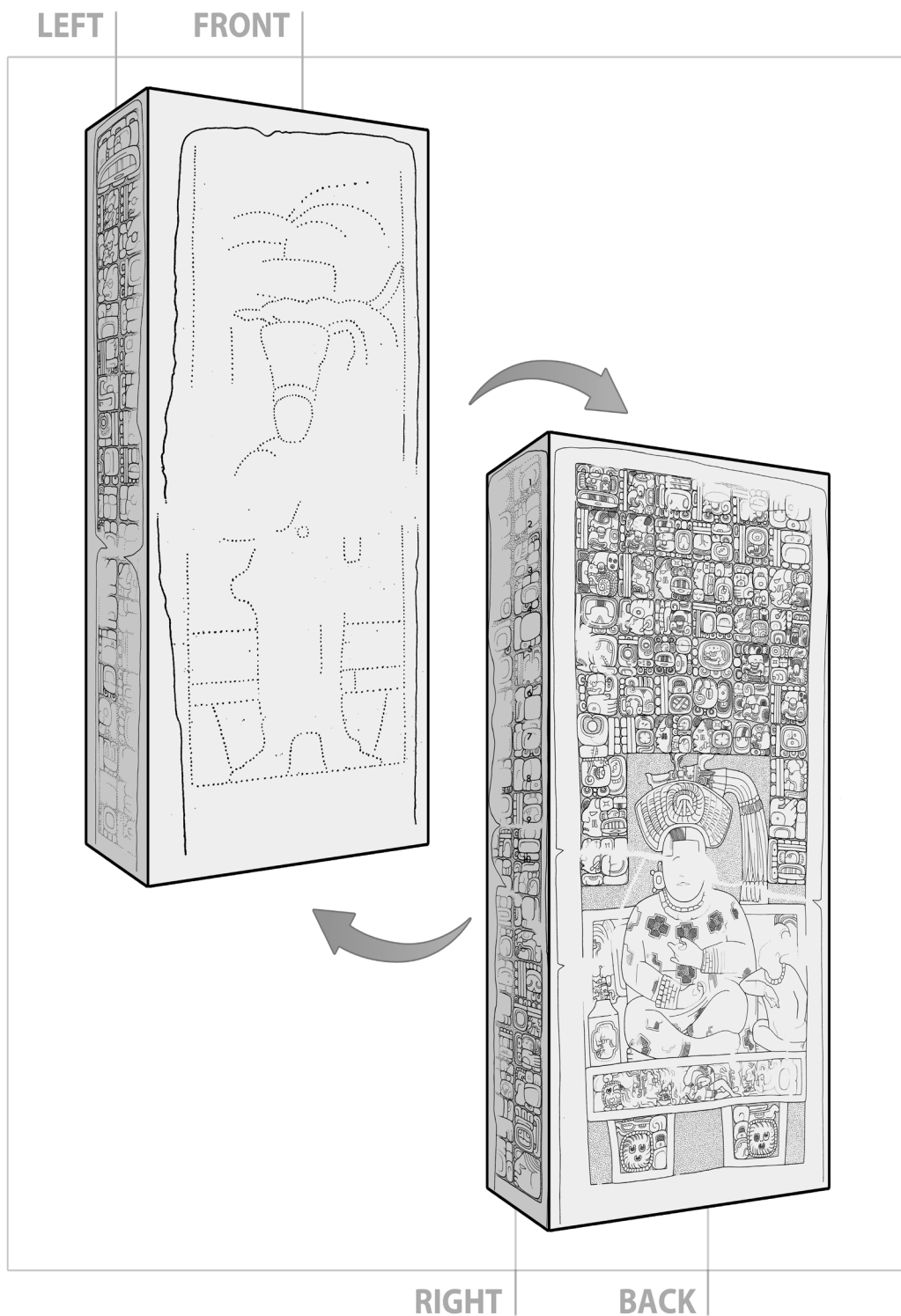


Figure 2.2. Model of Piedras Negras Stela 3, limestone, 711 CE, by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT. Drawing of sides and back by David Stuart, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Drawing of front by John Montgomery © Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org.

Tahn Ahk was preserved. The child's elbow rests on her mother's knee in a scene of maternal intimacy rare in Maya sculpture.

The texts on the monument's sides and back narrate the parallel celebrations of the fourteenth k'atun completion by K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II and Lady K'atun Ajaw, indicating they performed complementary roles in the renewal celebration. One passage is carved on the stela's narrow sides; it begins on the left side with the Long Count date 9.14.0.0.0 (1 December 711 CE), the completion of the fourteenth k'atun being celebrated by K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II. It then moves backward in time to relate events in his life, including his birth, his father's death, and his own accession, and ends with a restatement of the celebration of the k'atun ending.

The text on the stela's back recounts events in the life of Lady K'atun Ajaw, who is named as a princess from a place called Namaan; the events include her birth, her marriage to K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II, and the birth of their daughter, and it ends with her completion of the fourteenth k'atun. Although separate from the lateral texts, her chronology is contemporaneous with her husband's: his covering a span from 665 to 711 CE, hers covering a span from 674 to 711 CE, from their respective birth dates to the shared period ending. The texts have parallel endings, with both man and woman celebrating the k'atun ending; this parallelism is analogous to the mirroring of their images on the monument's front and back.

With its front image of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II standing before a throne, and its back image of his wife and daughter seated on the throne, the stela produces the illusion that the queen and princess are seated on the back of the same throne where the king stands, and the entire sculpture becomes a three-dimensional creation suggesting architectural and spatial depth (fig. 2.2). The side views of the figures are not fleshed out, for the monument's sides are filled with texts. An observer's memory is required to make the connection, but the depicted throne acts as a visual anchor to aid in imagining the three-dimensional space.²

Clancy (2009:109) has discussed how such recto-verso compositions require a viewer to walk around the monument, and Herring (2005:193) discusses the images on multiple faces of these and other stelae as "resonating 'memory images.'" An analogous example is the earlier Stela 31 (445 CE) from Tikal, Guatemala, which has carved images of a ruler—Sihiyaj Chan K'awiil II—on the front and his father, Yax Nuun Ahiin (by then deceased), on both sides. Someone walking around the monument would see two sides of the same body of Yax Nuun Ahiin, who is situated as if standing behind his son.³ In this case, the anchor for memory is Yax Nuun Ahiin's corporeal form (M. Miller 1999:98).

In contrast, Piedras Negras Stela 3 does not show one body from the front and back, but different bodies on either side of a hypothetical architectural space or divide—one body in front of a throne, oriented to the exterior, and two others behind the throne, oriented to a more secluded, interior setting. Stela 3's three-dimensional illusion involves comparisons of man/woman and exterior/interior, for seeing the back side is a peek into the inner recesses of the palace.

This illusion of secluded space on the back of Stela 3 is further heightened by accessibility—or inaccessibility—because the male overlooks the large West Group Plaza, and the females face the Structure J-4 temple and the more restricted royal palace in the Acropolis (fig. 2.3). Houston, Escobedo, and Webster (2008) discuss how Stela 3 addresses these two different domains, inside and outside the palace.

Not everyone who could see the stela's front could have seen the back, for few could have gained the access necessary to see the monument up close.

Stela 3's front and back thus play with the line between physical access—of both body and vision—and the metaphorical illusion of access. The carvings' content, placement, and orientation are analogous to how people would have seen the actual ruler and his family, for women and children in palace interiors would not have been as visible to the public as the enthroned or standing male ruler would when positioned on a pyramid, stairway, or dance platform. The placement of these images, then, also articulates with the spatial and social relationships of the West Group Plaza and the Acropolis. Their placement, moreover, exploits the possibilities both of three-dimensional illusion and of these representations' locations on physical objects in the built environment.

At the same time, the throne depiction does not quite work spatially, for Piedras Negras thrones—such as Structure J-6's Throne 1—were set flush against the back wall of a room, and Stela 3's projected arrangement of women seated on the back side of a throne that was then visible to viewers does not match the material record at Piedras Negras (see fig. I.11). A more general interpretation is that the stela's front and back look toward the plaza and palace and the activities that took place in them; that is, it portrays the contrast between more public and more secluded display. It also offers a conceptual structure for the relationship between king and queen: different but complementary, analogous to the parallel narrations of their celebrations of the k'atun ending.⁴

The differential placement of the images of the male and the females on Stela 3 is comparable to that of the murals of Bonampak Structure 1, for as Mary Miller has shown, the scenes involving women in palace interiors are painted on the rooms' inner vaults—Room 1's scene in the west vault and Room 3's scene in the east vault, both of which are visible only to the select people who gained access to the rooms. In the Room 3 vault scene, women of the court, seated on a throne-like bench, draw blood-letting cords through their tongues in an interior space (fig. 2.4). Comparable signs of bloodletting imagery are found in Lady K'atun Ajaw's Stela 3 depiction. Specifically, her headdress bears the “quadripartite badge,” which consists of an offering bowl or censer, marked with a K'in sign, that holds, among other items, a stingray spine for bloodletting (Joralemon 1974:59; Robertson 1974; Taube 2004b:275, 277). In addition, her throne has a K'awiil-conjuring scene on it. The throne and the interior place it marks are where royal women let blood.⁵

Stela 1, from the previous hotun (9.13.15.0.0, or 27 December 706 CE), is analogous to Stela 3 in its pairing of man and woman on the stela's front and back. Its front is largely destroyed from erosion, but it, too, appears to have had a standing male, shown frontally. On the back is Lady K'atun Ajaw (fig. 2.5). Earlier images of Piedras Negras women (Stelae 33 and 32) showed them in profile, but here the queen is portrayed standing and frontal, as only male rulers had been, which led Miller (1993:390; 1999:122–23) to suggest that she may have commissioned the monument.

Stela 1 was erected near Stela 3 and was centered in front of the J-4 pyramid stairway. As in Stela 3, the woman's portrayal was oriented toward the more secluded realm of the palace. Clancy (2009:80) observes, furthermore, that the shape of the overarching text evokes that of a doorway, and the sculptors carved the text so that

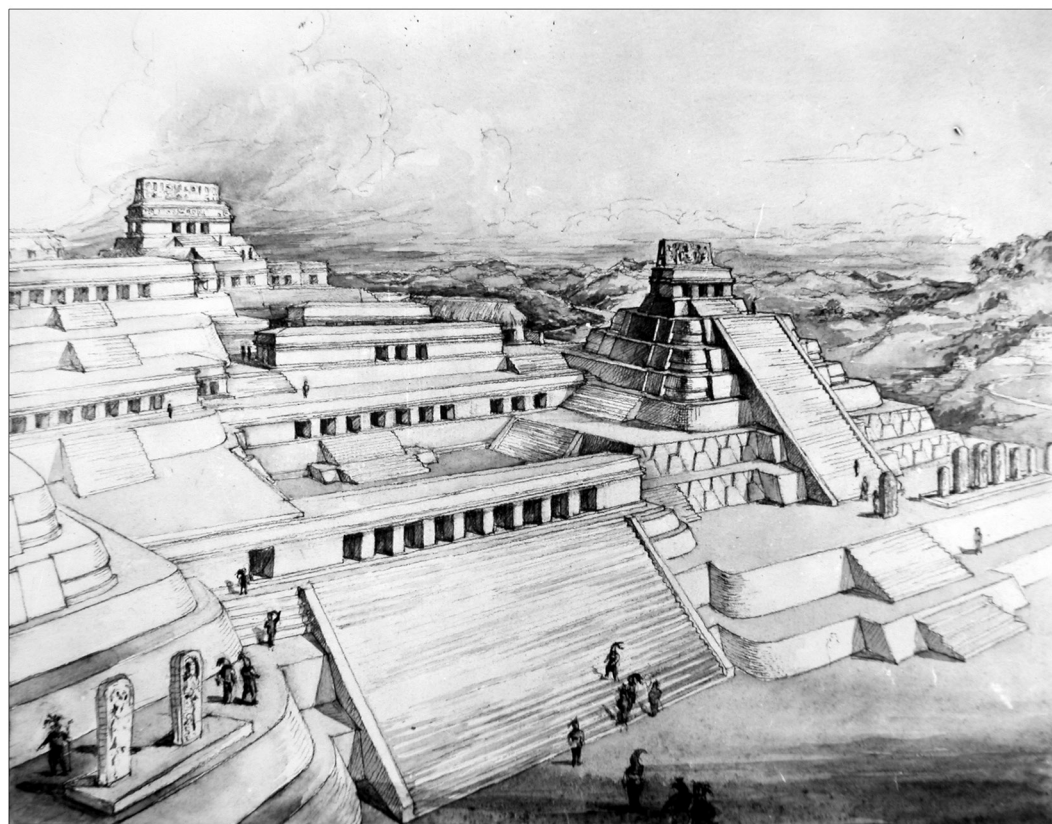
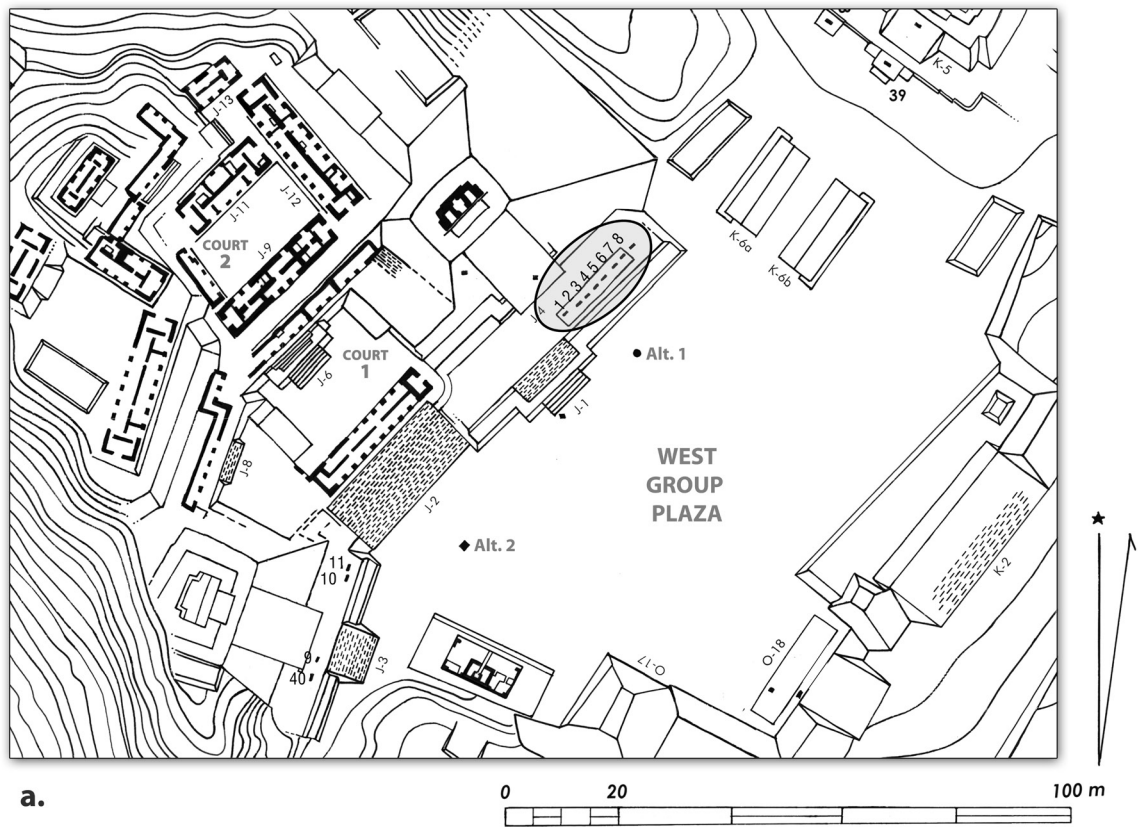


Figure 2.3. (*Facing page*) Piedras Negras West Group Plaza and Acropolis. a. Plan of Acropolis (northwest of the plaza). Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT. b. Piedras Negras Acropolis, ca. 7th–8th century CE, with Stelae 10 and 11 at left, Stelae 1–8 at right, and West Group Plaza in foreground. Watercolor rendering by Tatiana Proskouriakoff. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #58-34-20/40999. Digital File #CI030087.



Figure 2.4. Bonampak Structure 1, Room 3, East Wall (above vault spring), ca. 792 CE. Illustration by Heather Hurst with Leonard Ashby. Image courtesy of the Bonampak Documentation Project, Mary Ellen Miller, © Bonampak Documentation Project.

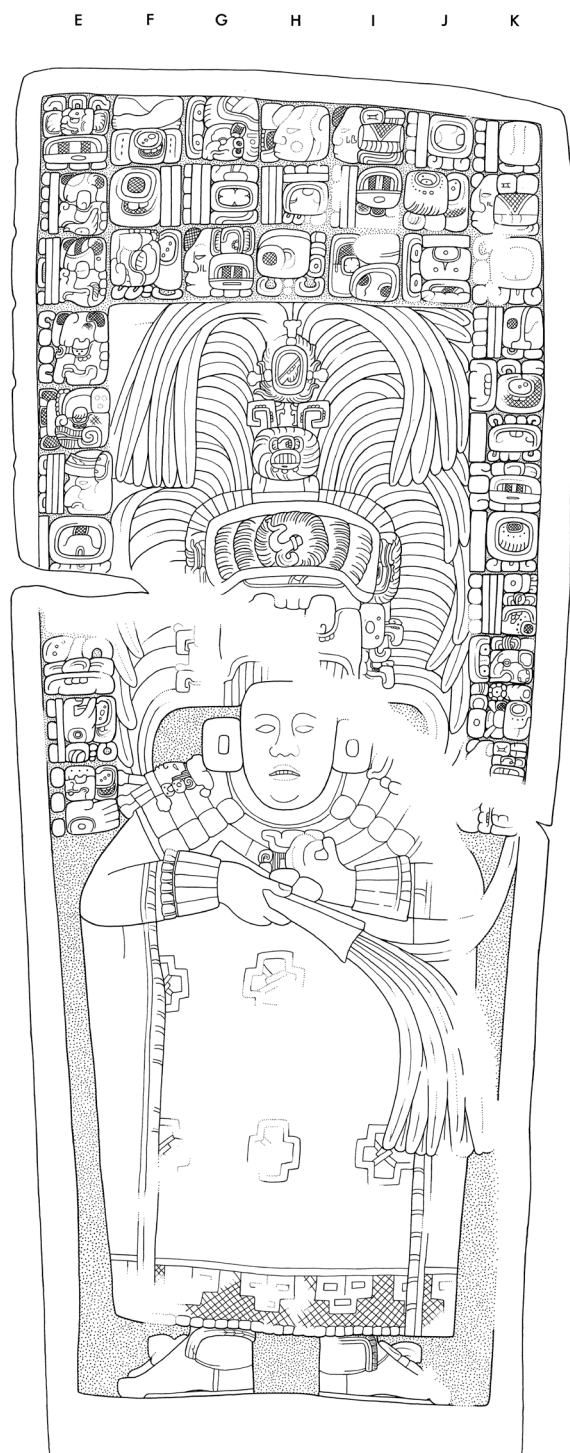


Figure 2.5. Back, Piedras Negras Stela 1, limestone, 706 CE. Drawing by David Stuart, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

it overlaps her headdress feathers, indicating that she is standing in or emerging from the doorway. The composition's placement on the monument's back looks toward the palace and its interior spaces and doorways. As with Stela 3, the Stela 1 images and their placement respond to their spatial contexts.

The presence of the queen on these stelae, however, was not just an experiment with space; there also certainly were political motivations in her depiction. The marriage of Lady K'atun Ajaw—a princess from the Namaan polity—to the Yokib prince clearly was of great importance to K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II and his father, who was involved in the nuptial arrangement (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; M. Miller 1993:375–77; Stuart 1985). New research shows that Namaan is the archaeological site of La Florida near the San Pedro Mártir River, one of the region's major river systems (Houston and Inomata 2009:149; Martin and Grube 2008:145; Zender 2002:167) (see map I.1).

Because of Namaan's location on a major river running parallel to the Usumacinta and on a natural land route from Piedras Negras eastward, Charles Golden (personal communication, 2010) hypothesizes that the marriage of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II and Lady K'atun Ajaw formed a political and trade alliance to control the movement of resources. In addition, Miller (1993:373–78) observes that Lady K'atun Ajaw's marriage and prominent portrayals were comparable to the importance at Yaxchilán of Lady K'abal Xook, Itzamnaaj Bahlam III's queen, who dedicated a house with carved lintels portraying her performance of ceremonial rites (see fig. 3.8). The existence of these monuments indicates that these women may have held substantial power, and that at both polities, marriage alliances were used to shape and consolidate power in the region.

Consequently, we can hypothesize that the Piedras Negras images of Lady K'atun Ajaw and her daughter, although not as public as the king's image, were meant to be seen by members of the court and visitors from other polities who were granted access to the palace. The orientation of the queen toward the palace thus may have pertained to the affairs and politics of inter-polity engagement within the palace, the domain of the court and esteemed visitors.

Stelae 1 and 3 are clear examples of sculptors' attention to the physical locations of monuments and their carvings at Piedras Negras. Indeed, it was not just what

the carved surfaces depicted or narrated that was meaningful, but also where and how these carvings were located relative to the monument's overall form and physical context, particularly in regard to socially charged spaces. Also essential to an understanding of Stela 3 is the placement of its texts, a subject discussed later in this chapter.

Seeing and Witnessing

The earliest stelae at Piedras Negras, including the sixth-century Stelae 29 and 30 and K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's early seventh-century Stelae 25 and 31, were carved only on their front faces. Most had a single image on the front, usually accompanied by a text; Stela 29 had only text. The pictorial focus was generally on the ruler, and there were no carvings on the lateral surfaces. Sculptors in K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's reign began to use stela sides for dedication texts, as on Stela 26 from 628 CE. Later, sculptors in Itzam K'an Ahk I's reign began to carve images on stela sides. Most subsequent stelae have images or texts on the front and sides.

The use of multiple sides of stelae to portray figures interacting in space allowed sculptors to highlight the divine ruler and at the same time to convey pictorial narratives and social interactions, particularly between kings and their wives, mothers, titled elite men of the court, and regional governors.⁶ The presence of images on monuments' sides and backs may have guided people to move around the monuments to see and experience the three-dimensionality of the objects and the figures, relationships, and hierarchies presented on them. Furthermore, their depicted likenesses may have acted as mediators between the rulers embodied by the monuments and the people who viewed them.

Scenes of rulers interacting with their mothers were common at Piedras Negras. Sculptors experimented with various portrayals; for example, the key scenes on Itzam K'an Ahk I's first two stelae—Stelae 33 and 32—depict him with his mother. He was only twelve years old when he acceded to the throne, and his mother, who held an *ajaw* title, probably was his regent (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Martin and Grube 2008:143).

The strategies for depicting Itzam K'an Ahk I and his mother vary, however. His first monument, Stela 33, cedes the focus on the ruler alone to the interaction between the young ruler and his mother (fig. 2.6).⁷ Dated to 9.10.10.0.0 (3 December 642 CE), Stela 33 celebrates his accession and first *hotun* ending while in office. Like Stela 25, his father's first monument, Stela 33 shows Itzam K'an Ahk I seated on an elevated platform (see fig. 1.5). But unlike his father's stela, which depicts the king frontally, with face and body in high relief, Stela 33 shows the young ruler in profile, looking and gesturing toward his mother. The composition suggests three-dimensional space, but it is only a flat representation. Sacrificing the powerful impact of the ruler's frontal presence, Stela 33 focuses on a social interaction.⁸

For his next monument, Stela 32, dated to 9.10.15.0.0 (7 November 647 CE), Itzam K'an Ahk I's sculptors returned the focus to the ruler yet portrayed him interacting with his mother by carving figures on contiguous faces of the stela (fig. 2.7). On the front is an image of Itzam K'an Ahk I, and on the stela's right side is a woman, probably his mother. She stands behind Itzam K'an Ahk I and looks toward him, again a witness to his ceremonial performance. The portrayal of their interaction uses the

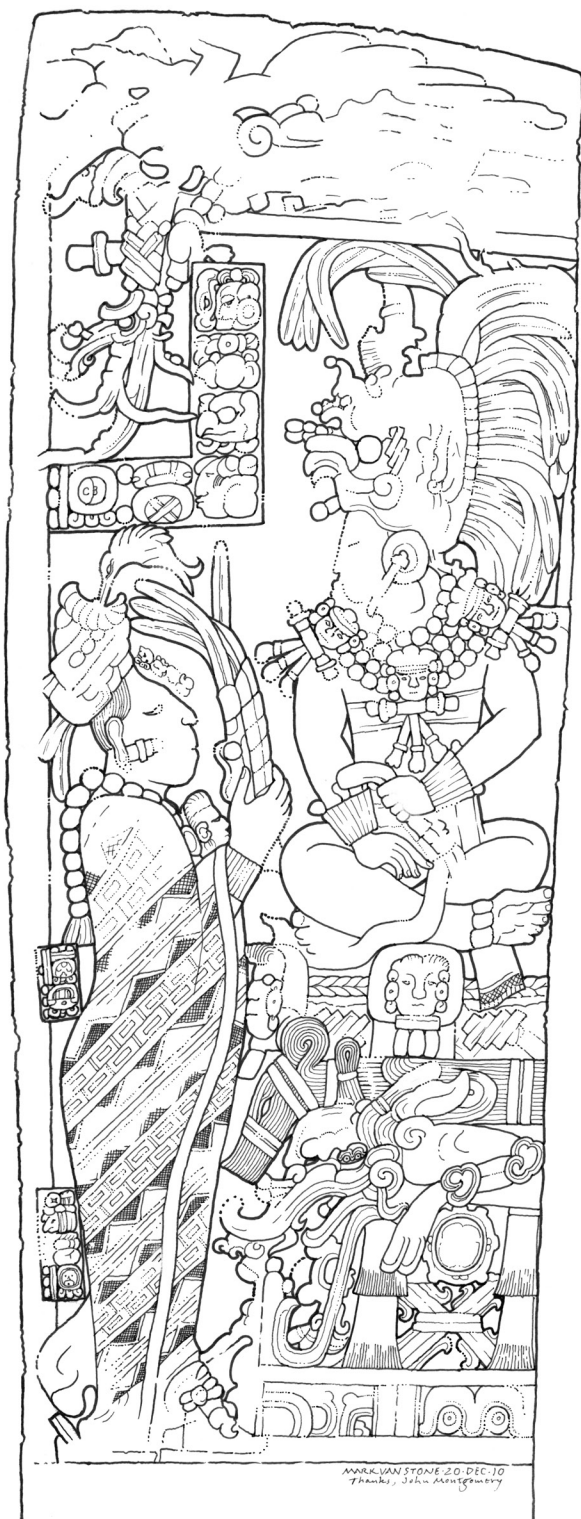


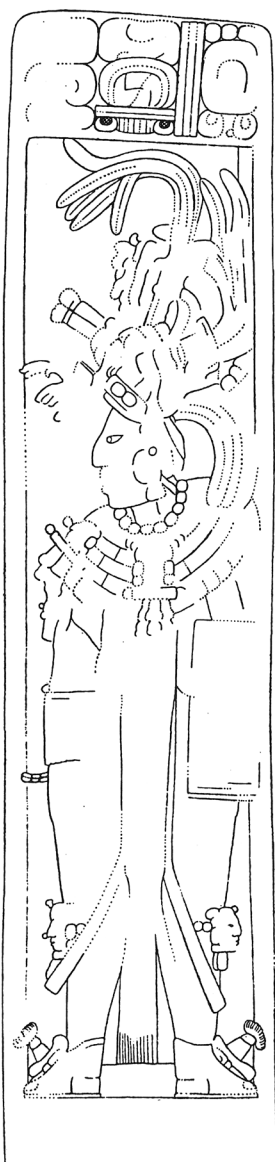
Figure 2.6. Front, Piedras Negras Stela 33, limestone, 642 CE.
Drawing by Mark Van Stone. Courtesy of Mark Van Stone.

four-sided stela to create a three-dimensional presence and multi-figural interaction. Indeed, the mother's depiction correlates with what her position in space would be if she were to stand behind the ruler.

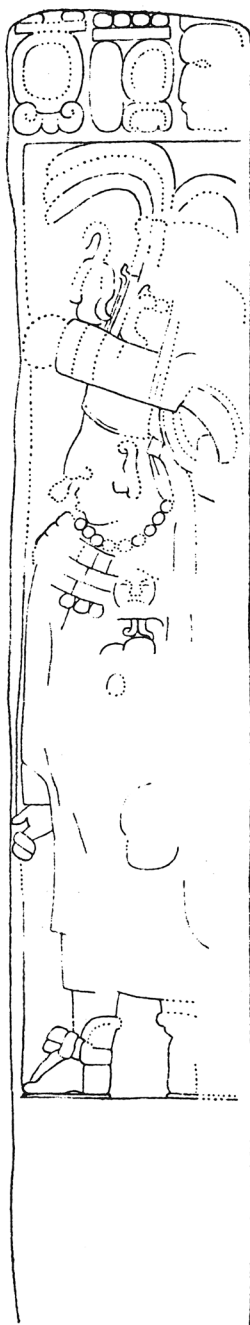
Sculptors of later rulers also used multiple sides of stone blocks to portray similar interactions between rulers and their wives, mothers, members of the court, and visitors. For example, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Stela 2 (dated to 9.13.5.0.0, or 17 February 697 CE) portrays the ruler on the front and a figure (probably a woman, either his mother or wife) on the left side; each is in profile and faces toward the other. On K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Stela 6, his inaugural stela (9.12.15.0.0, or 11 April 687 CE), the enthroned king is on the front. On the monument's left side is a standing man who looks toward the ruler and holds an incense bag, which indicates he is an active participant in a rite (fig. 2.8). Last, Itzam K'an Ahk II's Stela 11 (dated to 9.15.0.0.0, or 18 August 731 CE) bears an image of the ruler on the front and standing figures on both sides (fig. 2.9).⁹

On these stelae, the side figures stand behind the ruler as witnesses to the ceremonies performed on the monuments' front faces. The presence of the side figures conveys both a physical interaction and a metaphorical relationship among the figures. Their placement on the monuments' sides plays with the convergence of portrayed and actual three-dimensional forms and space as well as the interaction of people in that space. Such figural placement may have affected the experience of people near them by engaging their bodies and integrating them into the monument, in dialogue with the images. Indeed, in order to see and experience a stela's three-dimensional illusions, a person must move around the monument. Once near the monument's side, the person's position is analogous to that of the subsidiary figure, for both stand on the side, looking toward the divine ruler.

These supporting figures are at ground level, with body proportions similar to those of living observers standing on the ground. The close physical correspondence between the subsidiary figures and viewers also created opportunities for identification with the depicted witnesses, such that viewers were not simply looking at the figures but becoming part of the action. The sculptures thus opened a space for people to become witnesses to the vital image and participants in the ceremony portrayed, guiding people to witness the



FRONT



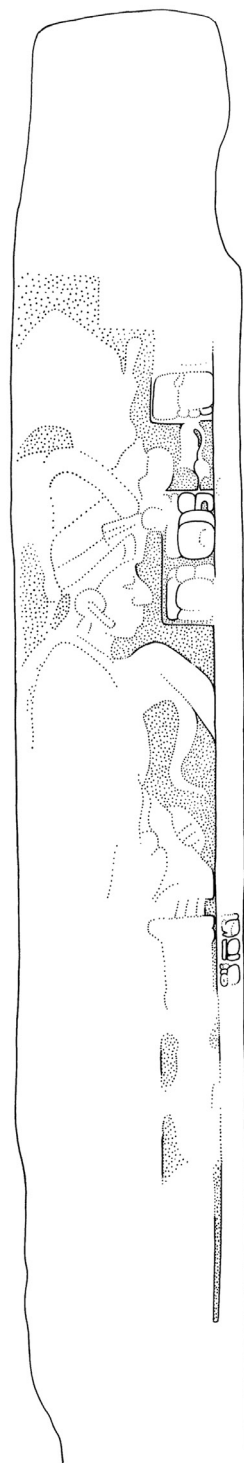
RIGHT

FRONT | **RIGHT**



Figure 2.7. Model of front and right sides, Piedras Negras Stela 32, limestone, 647 CE, as if on stone block. Model by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT. Drawings of front and right side by John Montgomery © Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org.

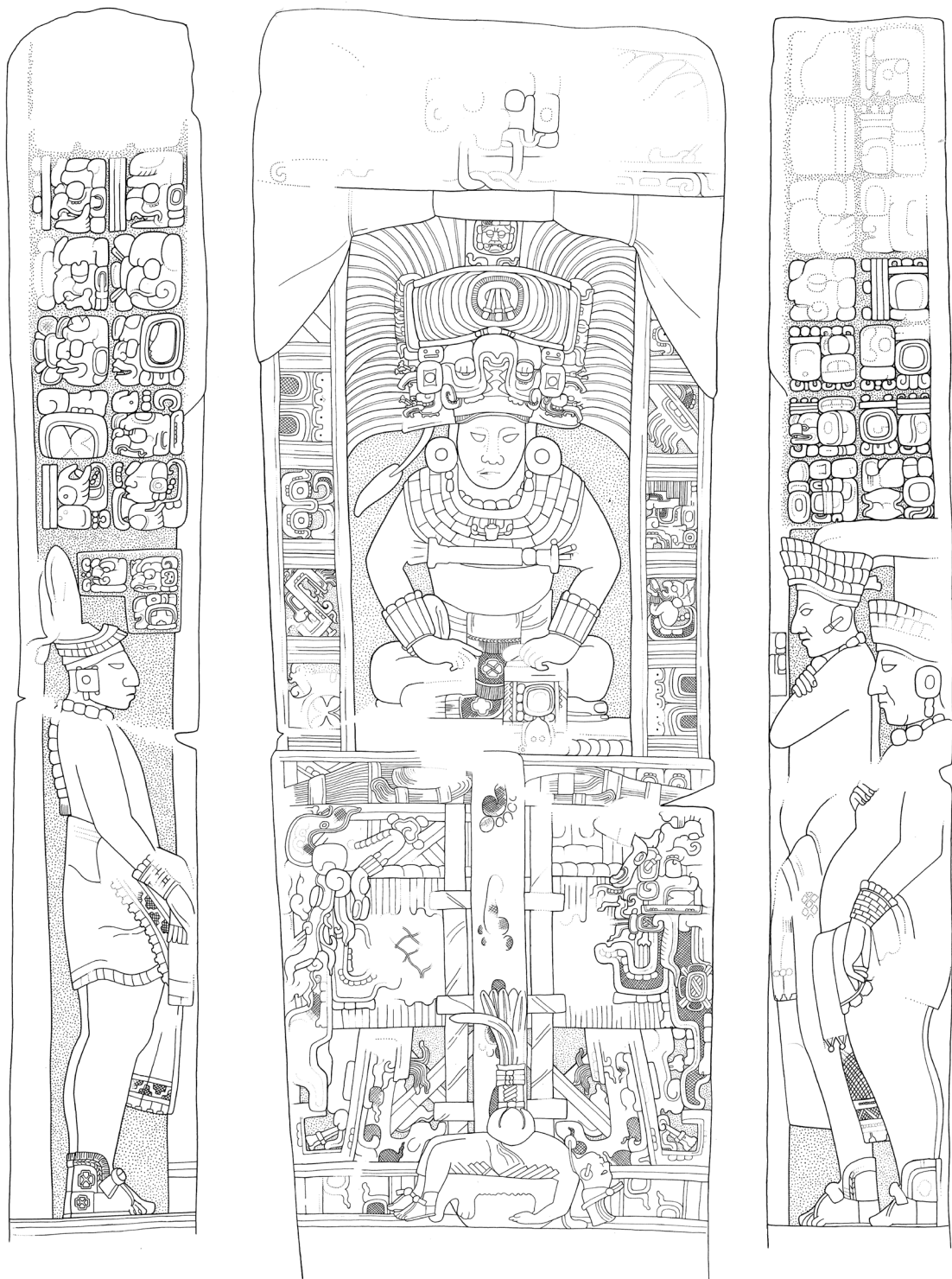
Figure 2.8. Left side and front, Piedras Negras Stela 6, limestone, 687 CE. a. Drawing of left side by David Stuart, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. b. Photograph of left and front by author. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala.



a.



b.



LEFT

FRONT

RIGHT

Figure 2.9. Front and sides, Piedras Negras Stela 11, limestone, 731 CE. Drawings by David Stuart and Ian Graham, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.



Figure 2.10. Left side of fallen Piedras Negras Stela 11, limestone, 731 CE, showing figure cut out from background. Photograph courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #59-50-20/74011.1.4. Digital File #98010008.

ceremony or make offerings. The sculptors of Stela 11 further emphasized this permeable boundary between living witnesses and depicted witnesses, whose bodies emerge from the background and are given bulk; parts of their bodies overlap the frame on each side of the stela, such that they partially leave the pictorial field and stand closer to the living viewer (figs. 2.9, 2.10).

The depiction of offerings to monuments and rulers further activated the monuments and the space around them. At the base of Stela 11, for example, in front of the depicted scaffold, is an image of a sacrificed human lying over a rounded vessel or altar (Maler 1901:57–58; Taube 1988a:336, 343) (fig. 2.11). The image shows that another way of interacting with rulers and their monuments was to place offerings in front of them. It also further designates the space in front of the monument as one of offering and supplication. Moreover, it makes permanent what was an ephemeral ceremony, similar perhaps to ones conducted in front of earlier stelae.

Stela 14, dated possibly to 9.16.10.0.0 (13 March 761 CE) (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008), was the inaugural stela of the next ruler, Yo'nal Ahk III; like the first monuments of his predecessors, it portrays him in an elevated niche (plate 3). As with his immediate predecessor's niche stela, it includes a sacrificed human in front of the scaffold (Maler 1901:63; Taube 1988a:336, 343). But Stela 14 has another crucial addition, for Yo'nal Ahk III's mother stands in front of the scaffold and looks up to her son. Holding a feathered bloodletter (Taube 1988a:346), she is both a witness to and an active participant in her son's period-ending ceremony.

In its portrayal of an interaction between a ruler and his mother, Stela 14 is reminiscent of Itzam K'an Ahk I's Stela 33. However, on Stela 14's front, Yo'nal Ahk III's sculptors used techniques of three-dimensional sculpting, including variations in depth of relief, and two-dimensional design, such as overlap and occlusion, to portray both the frontally facing ruler and his interaction with his mother. That her body obscures many details of the elaborately adorned scaffold was an inherent part



Figure 2.11. Front, Piedras Negras Stela 11, limestone, 731 CE. Photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #59-50-20/74011.1.4. Digital File #98010008.

of the artifice. With this combination of overlap, occlusion, and varying depth of relief, they crafted a more fully formed sculptural embodiment of the ruler facing outward, with his mother shown in a prominent place.

Her presence also may have created an opportunity for people looking at the monument to join this interaction. Indeed, as Herring (2005:194, 197, 200) has observed, the upward gaze of Yo'nal Ahk III's mother draws attention to the ruler in the niche. In addition, like the figures on other monuments' sides, her depiction at ground level places her closer to a person standing near the monument (see also Clancy 2009:138; Herring 2005:195). Her body is carved in a slightly higher level of relief than the background, so she is closer to an observer's physical space, further blurring the line between her—the depicted witness—and a living witness. The depictions of both the mother and the sacrificial victim before the king would have functioned as reminders of the practices of veneration of these divine rulers. Such veneration was crucial not only within the frame of the monument but also outside of it and involved people who, standing before the monument, could enter its sphere of ritual action.

These aspects of Piedras Negras sculptures' compositions and their relations with ambient space and potential viewers correspond with what we know about the cultural and social importance of witnessing and the display of social relationships in ancient Maya court culture. Houston, Stuart, and Taube have shown that the act and acknowledgment of witnessing performed important social functions in interpersonal and inter-polity relations. This emphasis on witnessing is apparent in texts and images on ancient Maya sculptures. For example, the hieroglyph **IL**, graphically written with an image of an eye, is the root of the verb "to see" (fig. 2.12). It is a common verb in the inscriptions, and Houston (2006:140–41) as well as Houston, Stuart, and Taube (2006:172–73) argue that it conveys not only seeing but also witnessing. In some cases, its use implied validation of an event and its actors by a person or being of higher status whose seeing and witnessing authorized the actors and actions. The act of witnessing and its commemoration in text and image also bound the actors together in social relationships and often in a hierarchy.

Another common glyphic expression that connotes witnessing and validation is *y-ichnal* (fig. 2.12). Houston, Stuart, and Taube describe *y-ichnal* as the visual field around a ruler or deity. They decipher the meaning of the ancient hieroglyph through its cognate in modern Yucatec Maya, *y-iknal*, which William Hanks (1990:91) describes as a "mobile field of action related to an agent the way one's shadow or perceptual field is." Hanks emphasizes the interactive nature of this relation, explaining that under face-to-face conditions, "the *-iknal* of either participant includes the other as well" and that the interactive corporeal field involves "reciprocal perspectives" (Hanks 1990:92). The interactive nature of this corporeal field appears to have been just as vital in the Late Classic period, and Houston, Stuart, and Taube (2006:173) maintain that the use of *y-ichnal* has a social function, for it is a "field of vision and witness that appears to have been crucial in validating ritual." Through this

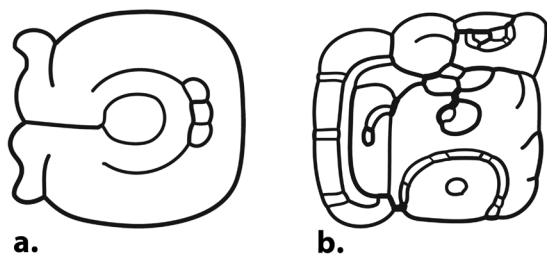


Figure 2.12. Glyphs related to seeing and field of view.

a. **IL**. b. *y-ichnal*. Drawings by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT, after John Montgomery.

reciprocal relationship, they contend, witnesses become “active celebrants” by way of their eyesight.

Images on ancient Maya stone sculptures portray deities and people in the act of witnessing; even when words such as *il* or *y-ichnal* are not used, pictorial interactions convey affiliations, hierarchies, and social bonds connoting validation and authorization. For example, third- and fourth-century Tikal sculptures such as Stelae 29 and 31 show ancestors hovering above rulers’ ceremonial performances; shrouded in smoke or with characteristics of deities, they sanction the event through their presence and sight. In comparable scenes on the sides of the fifth-century Stelae 31 and 40 from Tikal, ancestors portrayed as living humans bear witness to the rites performed by the living rulers on the monuments’ front faces. In addition, on the eighth-century Stelae 10 and 11 from Yaxchilán, ancestors appear in celestial cartouches above rulers; their presence validates the occasion and actors. Last, as discussed in chapter 3, older sculptures of rulers at Piedras Negras remained on view after the rulers had died. Newer sculptures generally were set next to or facing the older sculptures, and through these arrangements, the older sculptures acted as witnesses to their successors.

A person’s presence in the role of a witness bound him or her in a visible social relationship with the rulers. In the Piedras Negras sculptures discussed in the current chapter, for example, women and men are portrayed as witnesses to rulers performing ceremonies. Through these portrayed associations, witnesses are shown connected to power. Sometimes, when the images link personages of different polities, the relationships cross kingdoms. The presence of figures on the sides of stelae from the reigns of Rulers 3, 4, and 5—as well as the images of rulers and multiple subsidiary figures on Ruler 7’s Panel 3 and Stela 12—may coincide with the growing importance of members of the court, regional governors, war lieutenants, and others in the Usumacinta River region in the eighth century, evidenced by increasing numbers of courtly titles, individuals using those titles, and their dedications of monuments (see Houston and Stuart 2001:74–75; Jackson 2005).

Moreover, the importance of witnessing may apply not only to the characters depicted on the sculptures but also to the human experience of these sculptures. The qualities of the sculptures enumerated here guided people to engage with them. As people interacted with stelae and their vital images, they became witnesses to the portrayed ceremonial performances and were integrated into these social relationships. The act of witnessing the monument is thus analogous to and intertwined with the portrayed figures’ witnessing of the ruler’s ceremonial performance. By inspiring or enacting engagements and relations among objects, humans, and the divine, these monuments fostered essential Classic period Maya religious and political behavior.

Nonetheless, not everyone was allowed such interaction with the monuments. As indicated in images on ceramic vessels (see Jackson 2009), proximity to an *ajaw* would have been a privilege. Likewise, access to these monuments was probably controlled. The types of people portrayed as witnesses on the monuments, including rulers’ family members, regional governors, war lieutenants, and other titled elites, were likely among those with access to the monuments. Yet even more could have watched their interactions. People in the West Group Plaza, for example, might not have had physical access to the stelae on the J-1 terrace, but they could have seen

performers interacting with them. These varying degrees of participation and looking would have produced hierarchies of proximity, witnessing, and performance.

At the same time, some aspects of Piedras Negras stelae distanced the people who stood near them. One of these is that rulers were often positioned above a person standing on the ground. The carved design of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's Stela 25 is not as tall as later monuments, but Satterthwaite ([1944] 2005e:190) recorded that one meter of the plain part of the stela was exposed when the monument was upright, such that the ruler's face was "on eye level" (see also Clancy 2009:27). Unfortunately, Satterthwaite does not state the height of that hypothetical person or what his or her eye level would be. For Stela 26, the height of the ruler's eyes is about 1.5 meters above the image's carved ground line; the ruler's face thus would have been at the eye level of someone around 1.5 to 1.6 meters tall.¹⁰ Both Stelae 25 and 26 were installed on a platform extending from Structure R-9. There would have been little room to stand in front of these monuments, and access likely was restricted; a more typical viewing perspective might have been from the court about 2.5 meters below.¹¹ For someone standing in the court, the rulers on both stelae were significantly more distant. K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's Stela 31, in contrast, was on a more expansive platform with more room for spectators, but the monument was much larger than those earlier stelae, reaching 4.5 to 5 meters in height (Morley 1937–38, 3:64–65). The ruler on Stela 31 would have towered over anyone on the R-2 platform and even more so over people on the court level.

Itzam K'an Ahk I's Stelae 32, 33, and 35 are comparable in size to Stela 26, and thus the ruler's face on each was close to a viewer's eye level.¹² However, similar to the placement of Stelae 25 and 26, these stelae were set on a terrace in front of Structure R-5. Although at eye level of someone on the terrace, whether circumambulating the monument or acting as witness to the scene, the images of the ruler's face would have been more distant for the majority of people, who probably watched from court level.

The height of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's inaugural Stela 6 was comparable to many of his predecessors' stelae, but the platform that held Stelae 1–7 would have added about 40 centimeters more (Satterthwaite [1943] 2005d:180).¹³ Clancy observes that the ruler's face on Stela 6 was above the vision of a viewer 1.5 meters tall, and she says this arrangement would have created a disconnection between viewer and ruler (Clancy 2009:101–102). The disconnection would have been true also for sculptures of previous reigns, especially for the majority of spectators standing at court level in the South Group Court.

The other stelae of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II were much larger than those of his predecessors, and all but Stela 8 stood on the 40-centimeter-tall stela platform that was built on the J-1 terrace. For Stela 4, the ruler's eye level was almost 2.5 meters above the level of the terrace floor, where a potential spectator could stand, and for Stela 8, the ruler's eye level was about 1.75 meters above the terrace floor.¹⁴ The stelae's size and positioning made the portrayed rulers loom larger and even more distant from viewers' bodies, regardless of where they were standing, thus increasing the disconnection for all. For someone in the West Group Plaza, 5.4 meters below the terrace level, the rulers on the stelae were at an even greater distance (Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:25). Consequently, Clancy (2009:99) affirms that a viewer in the plaza would have seen much less detail than someone on the terrace, resulting in "different types of 'reading.'"

The heights of Itzam K'an Ahk II's stelae show variation; some are comparable in size to his predecessor's larger monuments. The ruler's eye level on Stela 11 was almost two meters above ground level and would have towered over an adjacent spectator, but on the smaller Stela 9, the ruler's eye level was about 1.6 meters above ground level.¹⁵ Yet, like his predecessors' stelae, Itzam K'an Ahk II's stelae were on a terrace that was 6.4 meters above the West Group Plaza (Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:25). People in this plaza, presumably the majority of spectators, had to look up toward the distant ruler.

Although the ruler's face on some of these monuments was near "eye level," this perspective probably was reserved for a select few. For the majority of spectators, looking at the stelae from courts and plazas, the architectural settings of these stelae established significant distance between the rulers and viewers. These distances correspond to depicted interactions of rulers and other people on the stone monuments and in paintings on Classic period Maya ceramic vessels. In these images, the rulers are the highest persons in the scene; subsidiary figures may be close to the ruler but are on a lower level, and persons of lower rank are at an even lower level, with captives generally the lowest in the visual hierarchy (see Houston 2006:142).

The portrayal of opened, fastened curtains also may heighten the conceptual distance between the ruler and those on the ground (fig. 2.9). On the one hand, the curtains are an example of playful verism, and the carving of soft, draping cloth in apparently obdurate stone offers another level of three-dimensional illusion, for they are layered on top of the niche and the ruler inside. At the same time, their open position reveals the ruler and conveys a privileged view, for the opening of the curtains and glimpses of rulers in these ceremonies may have been infrequent.

The monuments themselves may have been covered in curtains or wrappings (Stuart 1996:156–60). If covered, sculptures may have been revealed only to select audiences or on special occasions such as new year ceremonies, comparable to the sixteenth-century Yucatec changing and renewal of the materials that wrapped idols on the first day of the new year, as described by Diego de Landa (Tozzer 1941:151). Such hints of revelation and theatricality may have further activated the monuments and their performance by heightening the experience of seeing them and emphasizing the ephemeral nature of their exposure.

Captive Viewers

The proximity of prisoners depicted in their vulnerable states would have been even more striking to viewers. On Piedras Negras stelae from the early seventh to late eighth centuries, captives are shown sitting or kneeling at the base of the warrior monuments. On K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's Stela 26, Itzam K'an Ahk I's Stela 35, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Stelae 4 and 7, and Itzam K'an Ahk II's Stela 9, the captives sit or kneel on the same ground level as the ruler. Although most stelae were installed on small platforms, people could stand near or just below the monuments, and living prisoners may have been posed next to them, such that their bodies would have been close to or at the same level as the portrayed captives.

In some cases, sculptors highlighted the proximity and assimilation of viewer, performer, or prisoner to the portrayed captives by depicting them on a lower level congruent with that of the viewer.¹⁶ For example, on the front of Stela 8, which



Figure 2.13. Front, Piedras Negras Stela 8, ca. 724–29 CE. Photograph combines images from Teobert Maler (1901) and Ian Graham, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 43, Stuart and Graham (2003), Peabody Museum Press.

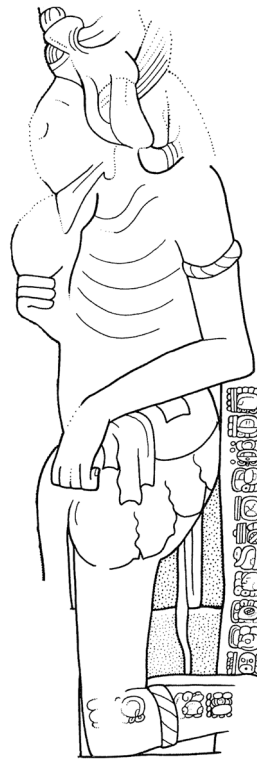


Figure 2.14. Detail, Piedras Negras Stela 8, limestone, ca. 724–29 CE. Detail of drawing of front by David Stuart and Ian Graham, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

bears an enormous image of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II dressed in Teotihuacan-inspired warrior costume; two captives kneel on a step below the upright ruler; in fact, they kneel on the same level on which the observer stands (fig. 2.13).¹⁷ The disparate levels in the image—especially in relation to its ambient space—further emphasized a living person's assimilation to the humiliated captives and distance from the ruler, who towers over all of them.

The placement of hieroglyphic captions highlights this assimilation. The emaciated captive kneeling on the right side is a sajal of Yaxchilán's Itzamnaaj Bahlam III; this sajal was captured in 726 CE (Martin and Grube 2008:123, 147). A text describing his capture appears in a vertical line next to his body that continues horizontally across his bent leg. It is, in fact, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's name that appears on his leg and effectively marks ownership of his body (fig. 2.14). Reading this caption guides a reader's eyes down and across the captive's body, and the minuscule size of the inscription obliges an observer to get close to his emaciated form.

The spectator's implied approximation to the prisoner is analogous to what Miller (2002:20–21) has described for the experience of viewing the paintings and

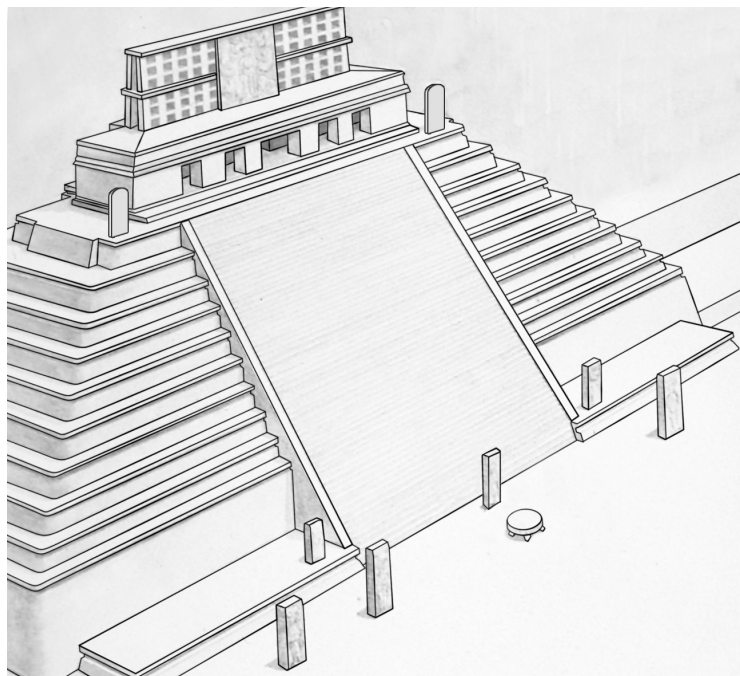


Figure 2.15. Bonampak Structure 1, Room 2, North Wall. Illustration by Heather Hurst with Leonard Ashby. Image courtesy of the Bonampak Documentation Project, Mary Ellen Miller, © Bonampak Documentation Project.

architecture of Bonampak Structure 1. To people sitting in the room, she says, a person entering the doorway of Room 2 would appear as part of the tableau of the north wall's display of injured, humiliated prisoners (fig. 2.15). In the midst of the grisly scene, the entering person would appear as if the next potential captive, a most humbling and vulnerable position.

Those humbled by Piedras Negras Stela 8's physical form, content, and composition may have been local courtiers, captives, or esteemed visitors. The humbling effect may have been especially poignant for captives and esteemed visitors from polities such as Yaxchilán, with which Piedras Negras had relationships alternating between alliance and conflict—particularly because Stela 8 portrayed a Yaxchilán

Figure 2.16. Piedras Negras Structure O-13, 8th century CE; drawing by Kevin Cain, *INSIGHT*, after rendering by Mark Child and Heather Hurst. Courtesy of Kevin Cain and Heather Hurst.



captive. As Piedras Negras Panel 3's image indicates, during times of alliance, esteemed Yaxchilán visitors had access to the throne room and palace, and they may have seen Stela 8 on the J-1 terrace. The display of their captive compatriot may have served as an important reminder of the importance of loyalty to the Yokib kings.

We see this effect again with K'inich Yat Ahk II's Stela 12, dated to 9.18.5.0.0 (11 September 795 CE). It was erected on the upper terrace of the O-13 pyramid (Morley 1937–38, 3:247), Itzam K'an Ahk II's funerary pyramid (Escobedo 2004; Houston et al. 1999). Stela 12 has a vertically oriented pictorial narrative that integrates with the vertical structures of the pyramid on which it was installed (figs. 2.16, 2.17).

The image carved in low relief on Stela 12's front face is a multi-figural scene that includes thirteen figures sitting and standing on five levels of a building. Ten captives are at the bottom in three levels, and two warriors, one of them a La Mar ruler, Mo' Ahk Chahk, who had close ties to Piedras Negras, stand in the middle (Houston 2004:276; Zender 2002:177–81). K'inich Yat Ahk II is seated at the top. The image's subject matter is similar to Panels 4 and 15, with captives presented to a ruler, though here the figures are stretched out vertically on the rising levels of a stairway. As in Stela 8, the captives are separated from the ruler by steps.

The Stela 12 image creates an illusion of three-dimensional space, architecture, and human interaction. Its sculptors also played with the convergence of represented and actual three-dimensionality, for the depicted levels resemble the rising levels of Structure O-13. The stela may in fact depict a captive presentation that happened on this temple.

Figure 2.17. Front, Piedras Negras Stela 12, limestone, 795 CE.
 Photograph by author. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y
 Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y
 Etnología de Guatemala.

The image on the front of Stela 12 guides a viewer's eyes vertically, from the captives at the bottom to the enthroned ruler at the top, and vice versa, and up and down the O-13 pyramid. Moreover, although some of the image—particularly when colored—might have been visible from the plaza, one would have had to move at least partway up the pyramid to see the image's complex details. Miller has suggested that a person in the plaza would have seen just the monument's upper portion and the enthroned ruler; only those who ascended the pyramid could have seen the captives (M. Miller 1999:122).

Ascending the building's vertical levels thus mediated one's experience of the stela: more of the carving was revealed as one rose higher up the pyramid and closer to the stela. Likewise, the image's vertical layering accorded with the kinetic activity of moving up or down the pyramid. In a further integration of representation and context, this vertical movement aligns with archaeological evidence of how the pyramid was used. Specifically, it corresponds with a series of buried caches that both materialized and inspired another rising—a ceremonial pathway up the pyramid's stairs from Itzam K'an Ahk II's tomb at its base to the shrine at its summit, as described in chapter 4.

At the same time, the Stela 12 representation also marked the vertical levels of the pyramid as socially charged spaces in which social hierarchies were performed—where captives were presented before K'inich Yat Ahk II, with war lieutenants mediating. The integration of the stela's image and its physical context mapped these hierarchies onto the building's façade, acknowledging or even creating differentially charged social spaces on the pyramid's vertical levels. Looking at the monument and ascending or descending the pyramid situated people in this charged space, both in relation to the representation and to the social hierarchies mapped onto the pyramid's levels.



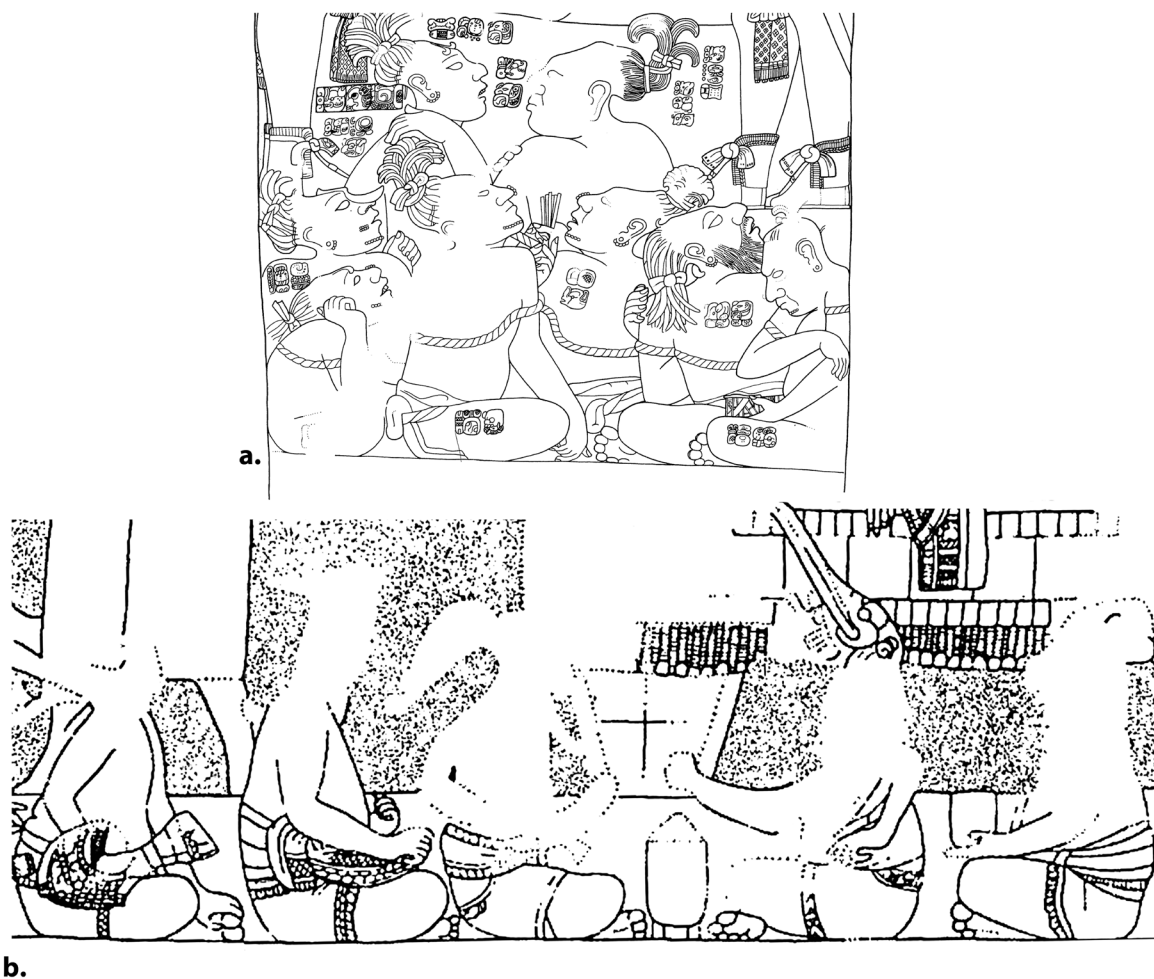


Figure 2.18. Comparison of figures on Stela 12 and Panel 3. a. Detail of front, Piedras Negras Stela 12, limestone, 795 CE. Detail of drawing by David Stuart, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. b. Detail of Piedras Negras Panel 3, limestone, ca. 782 CE, from drawing by John Montgomery © Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org. Drawings not to scale.

People in the plaza would have seen little detail of the Stela 12 images, though its bright colors would have aided legibility. In contrast, people with access to Structure O-13's upper terraces may have been allowed to walk around stelae and engage with their architectural contexts, activating the sculptures and spaces with the presence and motion of their bodies. Access to the upper terraces also permitted visual access to images—such as the captives carved on Stela 12's lower register—not visible to people in the plaza. Those who could ascend the pyramid may have been privileged members of the Yokib kingdom—such as the ruler, royal family, or war lieutenants—or dignitaries or captives from other kingdoms.

Yet anyone's position in front of Stela 12 was at the level of the captives and not of the king, and observing it may have induced discomfort, particularly for those visitors whose alliances and diplomacy were essential to prevent them from becoming one of the doomed prisoners at the bottom of the stairway. The portrayal of the Stela 12 captives recalls that of the members of the court seated below the ruler's throne on Panel 3, which was installed on Structure O-13 near Stela 12.¹⁸ They, too, are separated from the ruler by their placement on a lower stair (plate 5, figs. 2.17, 2.18). The articulations of the Panel 3 court members' bodies and the Stela 12 captives' bodies resemble each other. For instance, their hips, upper legs, knees, and feet are in similar positions; their hands are raised and gesturing in comparable directions and forms; and the fringes on the edges of the courtiers' garments visually rhyme with the ropes binding the captives' bodies. Also, in both compositions, multiple figures have titles such as *sajal*, although their status has been calamitously transformed from trusted advisers of one ruler to humiliated captives of another. The presence of Stela 12 near Panel 3 on Structure O-13 may have been a reminder to both local advisers and visitors of their potentially precarious position and the necessity for alliance—so that they would not become humiliated captives at the bottom of the stairway.

K'inich Yat Ahk II's Stela 15

Also installed on the O-13 pyramid's upper terrace, on the other side of the superstructure from Stela 12, was K'inich Yat Ahk II's Stela 15 (Morley 1937–38, 3:250) (plate 9). Dedicated on 9.17.15.0.0 (2 November 785 CE), it commemorated his first *hotun* ending while in office. A nearly three-dimensional embodiment of K'inich Yat Ahk II, it stands on the pyramid's upper terrace, just as the living king it portrayed would have done.

Earlier in this chapter, I described how Piedras Negras sculptors used multiple sides of stelae to experiment with the merging of represented and actual three-dimensional space. But their experimentation with three-dimensionality also appears to have stemmed from the technical process of working the stone. A review of sculptures from the reigns of Rulers 1 through 7 makes this apparent, for over time, the rulers' frontally portrayed faces were made more three-dimensional and the level of relief increasingly deep. The focus primarily was on the release of the head that was the seat of the soul and locus of identity (Houston, Stuart, and Taube 2006:60), although a comparable trend toward more three-dimensional sculpting of their upper bodies is clear as well.

With Stela 15, K'inich Yat Ahk II's sculptors came the closest to releasing the body from the stone block. The k'uhul ajaw's body is carved almost in the round, although it is still connected at the back to the rectangular block (plate 9). This was a technological advancement at Piedras Negras, for the region's limestone was less conducive to such carving than other types of rock, such as Copán's volcanic tuff.

Nonetheless, the drive to create more three-dimensional forms was not simply to achieve technical or artistic mastery but to make more explicit the living qualities of these sacred stones in their embodiment of rulers. In the case of Stela 15, its more fully realized three-dimensional form conveyed a vital presence, as if the ruler were standing there, an actual body in space, gleaming with the heat of the sun-faced k'uhul ajaw. Installed at the top of the pyramid, it would have given the impression that the ruler himself was present.

As with Stela 12, access to Stela 15 would have been limited because of its location at the top of the temple. People who could approach the monument could engage more intimately with this divine embodiment. Nevertheless, in its massive size and three-dimensionality, Stela 15's human form would have been visible to people in the East Group Plaza, comparable to what people on the plaza would have seen when the ruler himself stood, danced, or otherwise performed on the pyramid's uppermost terrace.

Performative Texts and Sacred Movements

The placement and deployment of texts carved on multiple sides of the monuments also can be revelatory of how the ancient Maya may have been guided to interact with them. Most notably, in order to read or perform the texts, one must circle around the monuments. With such reading of texts, whether followed silently or recited aloud, the importance was not necessarily in what the texts said but in what they did, particularly in inspiring circumambulation, a movement associated with sacred processions, world creation myths, and renewal ceremonies and dances, as discussed later in this chapter.

At the same time, the content of the texts intersected with this movement, for they were dedication texts. As explained in chapter 1, the most commonly used phrase for monument dedication at Piedras Negras was k'al tuun (stone-binding). The reading of the texts in a circular format around the monument correlated with that wrapping and may even have enacted another kind of stone-binding performance integral to the monument's dedication and the period-ending renewal. Stela 3 offers a good example of this format. Above, I described the images sculpted on Stela 3's front and back and the pictorial and spatial illusion produced upon looking at them while moving around the monument. For those allowed to see Stela 3's front, sides, and back, with enough proximity to move around the monument to read its texts, reading the texts was also kinetic. The texts are carved on three sides of the monument, and to see them all requires movement around it.

In an extended narration, the texts on Stela 3's sides tell of the stone's dedication and events in K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's life. One must move from the left to the right side of the monument to follow this text (fig. 2.19). The physical experience of moving around the stela guides a person to circle the monument counterclockwise. Viewing the monument's back and its image of the queen and princess continues this circumambulation; the back contains a wealth of information about Lady K'atun

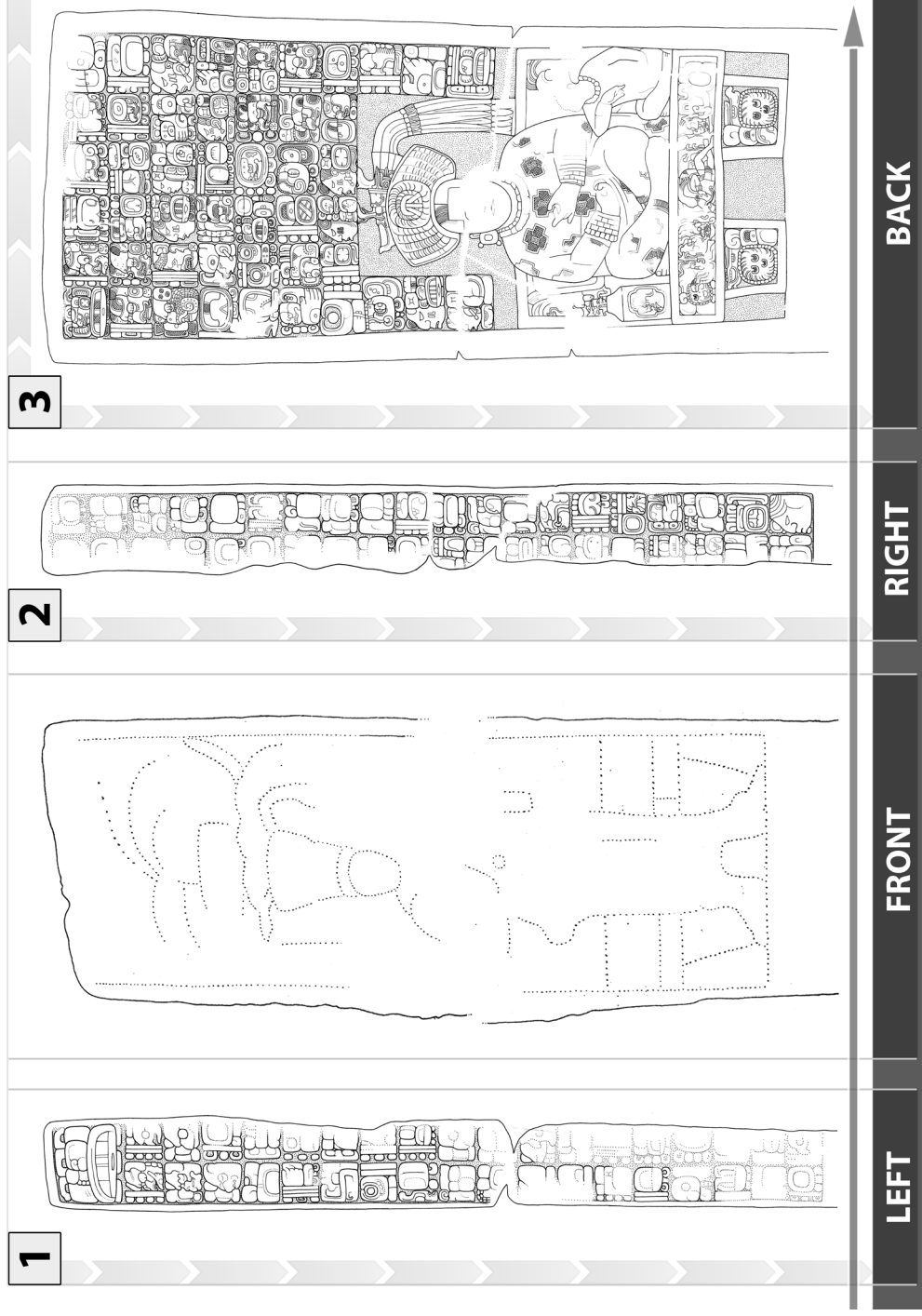


Figure 2.19. Model of Piedras Negras Stela 3, limestone, 711 CE, carved surfaces rolled out, with arrows and numbers showing direction of reading order. Model by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT. Drawing of front by John Montgomery © Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org. Drawings of back and sides by David Stuart, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

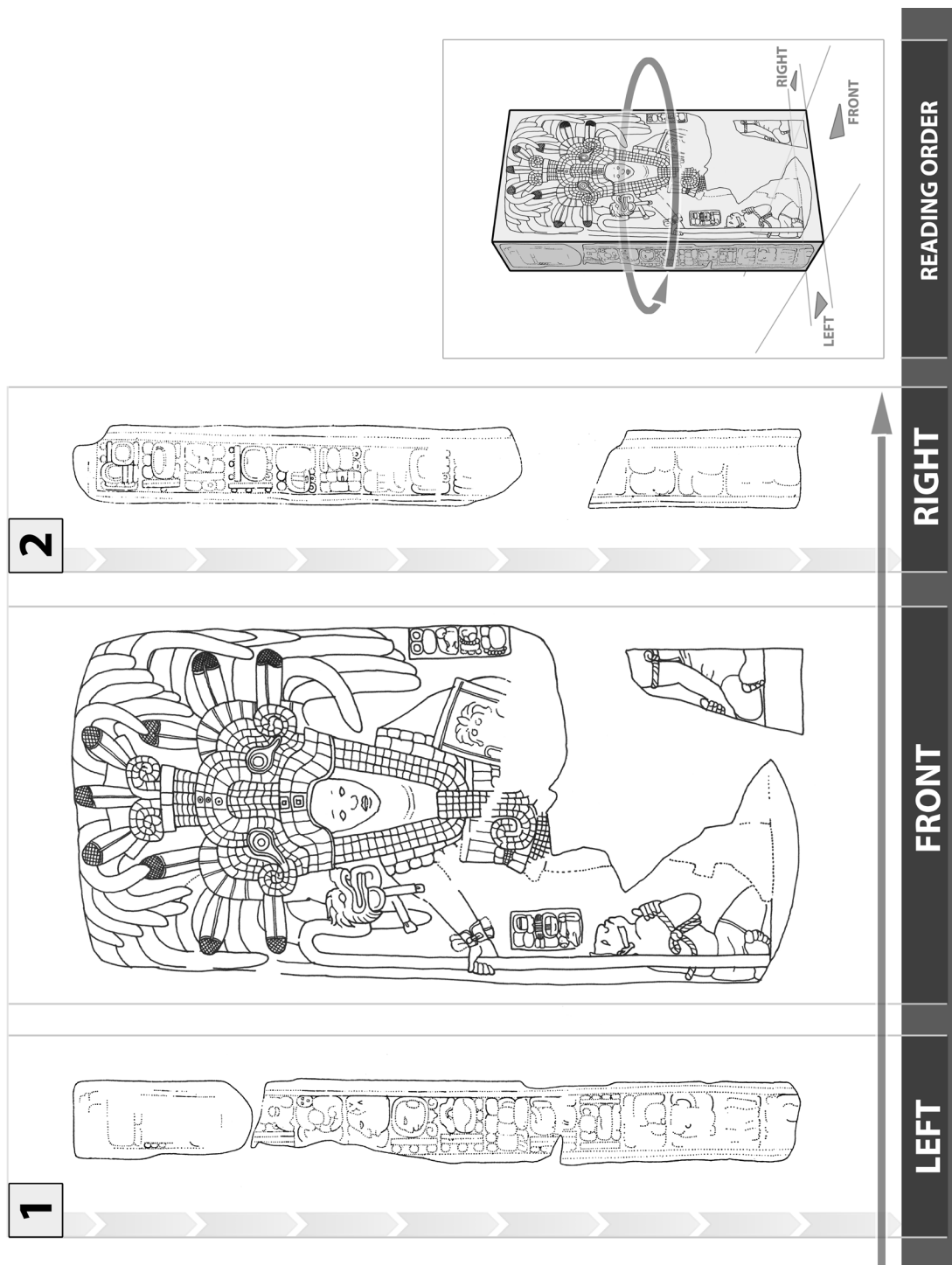


Figure 2.20. Model of Piedras Negras Stela 26, limestone, 628 ce, front and sides, with arrows showing direction of reading order. Model by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT. Drawing of front by Linda Schele, © David Schele, courtesy Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org. Drawing of left side and right side by John Montgomery © Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org.

Ajaw's life. As stated above, her text is separate from her husband's lateral texts, but their chronologies are parallel. Furthermore, the two texts physically meet: the final event of the text on the back, Lady K'atun Ajaw's celebration of the k'atun ending, is the same as the initial event on the stela's left side just around the corner, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's celebration of the same k'atun ending. The ending thus meets and melds with the beginning, forming a cyclical structure that is both analogous to and part of a circumambulation of the monument.

This reading pattern is seen on earlier Piedras Negras stelae, including K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's Stela 26, the first to have carvings on multiple faces. The front of Stela 26 has an image of the ruler and captives. The monument's sides bear a continuous textual narrative that begins on the left side with the date 9.9.15.0.0 (20 February 628 CE) and the celebration of a hotun ending. The monument is broken and the text highly eroded, which prevents us from knowing its full content, but it is clear that the right side was a continuation of the left side's text. As with Stela 3, reading the full Stela 26 text requires movement from the monument's left side to its right side, proceeding counterclockwise and passing across the body of the warrior king (fig. 2.20).

A similar counterclockwise format was used for most sculptures from the reigns of all subsequent Piedras Negras rulers. In most cases, the reading order of the text was counterclockwise, from the monument's left side to its right side. Such textual formats appear on the stelae of Rulers 1 to 7, including the following:

K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's Stela 26

Itzam K'an Ahk I's Stelae 32, 35, 37, 38, and 39

K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Stelae 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8, and Altar 1

Itzam K'an Ahk II's Stelae 9, 10, 11, and 40, and Altar 2

Yo'nal Ahk III's Stela 16

Ha' K'in Xook's Stela 13

K'inich Yat Ahk II's Stelae 12 and 15.¹⁹

A similar format also may have been used for other stelae, though the erosion of one or more sides of Stelae 14, 17, 18, 19, 33, and 34 precludes a determination of their overall compositions.

In some cases, text on the monument's front is read between the lateral sides, explicitly entailing a counterclockwise reading. For example, Itzam K'an Ahk I's Stela 32, dated to 9.10.15.0.0 (7 November 647 CE) and located in front of Structure R-5, bears a text on its left side, an image of a king on its front, and an image of a woman—perhaps his mother—on the right side (fig. 2.7). The text on the monument's left side begins with a Long Count date and a calendar round, and this phrase continues in a band above the image on the front and right sides. The text thus moves around the monument counterclockwise—from its left side, across the front, and to the right side. During the process of reading and circumambulation, a person moves across the bodies of the king on the front and the woman on the right side. Yet this reading order is counter to the direction that the depicted figures face, such that the person moves across and faces the portrayed bodies, becoming a witness to their vital presences on and within the monument.

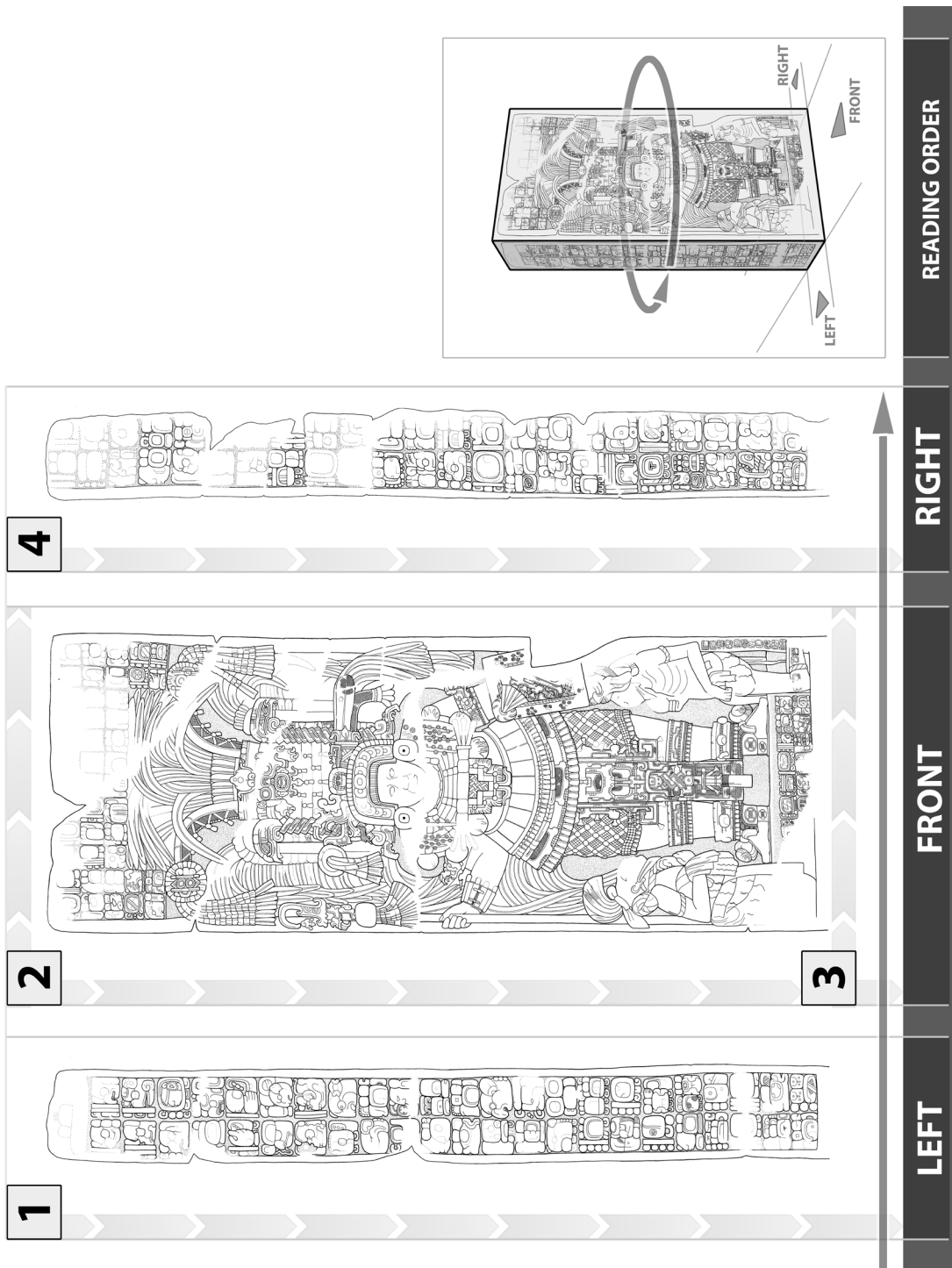


Figure 2.21. Model of Piedras Negras Stela 8, limestone, ca. 724–729 CE, with arrows showing direction of reading order. Model by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT. Drawings of front and sides by David Stuart and Ian Graham, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Another stela with text that wraps around the monument is K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Stela 8 (fig. 2.21). The text reads from the left side, across the front, and to the right side. With three sides of the stela involved, Stela 8 prescribes a distinct counterclockwise path. This path passes through K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's body on the monument's front, for one section is at the top—above the ruler's image—and another is at the bottom; both recount events in his life and the lives of his wife and father.

The Piedras Negras monument with the most explicit counterclockwise format is K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Altar 1, which was installed in the West Group Plaza just below his stelae. Dated to 9.13.0.0.0 (15 March 692 CE), Altar 1 is a circular table on three supports (see fig. I.8). The table's upper surface was carved with text and figural representations. At its center was an image that was eroded when Maler saw it, but he sketched what remained of two seated figures (Maler 1901:45, fig. 19). The image was encircled by glyphs, although they are eroded and now illegible. Additional texts were wrapped around the table's periphery and on each of the wide outer faces of the three altar supports.

Because the texts on the top surface are eroded, we cannot determine how they related to the rest of the altar, but in the absence of that information, it appears that the reading order begins on the tabletop's periphery. The text begins in the northwest and completes a counterclockwise circle around the table's periphery, with its end meeting its beginning (see Morley 1937–38, vol. 5, pt. 1, plate 143). It then runs in another counterclockwise circle following the three altar supports, starting with the northwest support, which is set beneath the beginning of the text on the tabletop's edge, and proceeding to the supports at the southwest and east. This reading order causes a reader or performer to move around the monument's perimeter twice—if not more, depending on what was inscribed on the altar's tabletop—in a counterclockwise direction (fig. 2.22). The text guides circumambulation in a manner similar to the stela reading paths, but this circular, cyclical movement is more pronounced because of the full completion of the circle and multiple circuits.

Altar 1's text correlates with this circular, cyclical movement, for it lists a series of celebrations of period endings over a span of more than 5,500 years. It begins in the deep mythological past, in 4710 BCE, and moves through a series of period endings, including that of 4 Ajaw 8 Kumku, or 13.0.0.0.0 (8 September 3114 BCE in the Julian calendar). This date has come to be known as the ancient Maya "creation" and marks the end of the previous cycle of 5,125 years and the beginning of the cycle in which the Classic period Maya flourished (see Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993:57–68). Another period ending noted in the text is 9.13.0.0.0 (15 March 692 CE), the altar's probable dedication date. It culminates in a future date, 10.0.0.0.0 (11 March 830 CE), the completion of the tenth bak'tun (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Martin and Grube 2008:145; Teufel 2004:528–34).

The Altar 1 text thus involves the commemoration of period endings—k'atuns, bak'tuns, and more—that are juxtaposed with the 13.0.0.0.0 date, although some parts of the text also recount other events in the biographies of rulers, both historical and legendary (Houston 2004:273; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2003:225). There is no apparent distinction between mythological and historical dates, for all are part of the same series of temporal cycles and world renewal celebrations in the past, present, and future. All the period endings, moreover, are treated as analogous

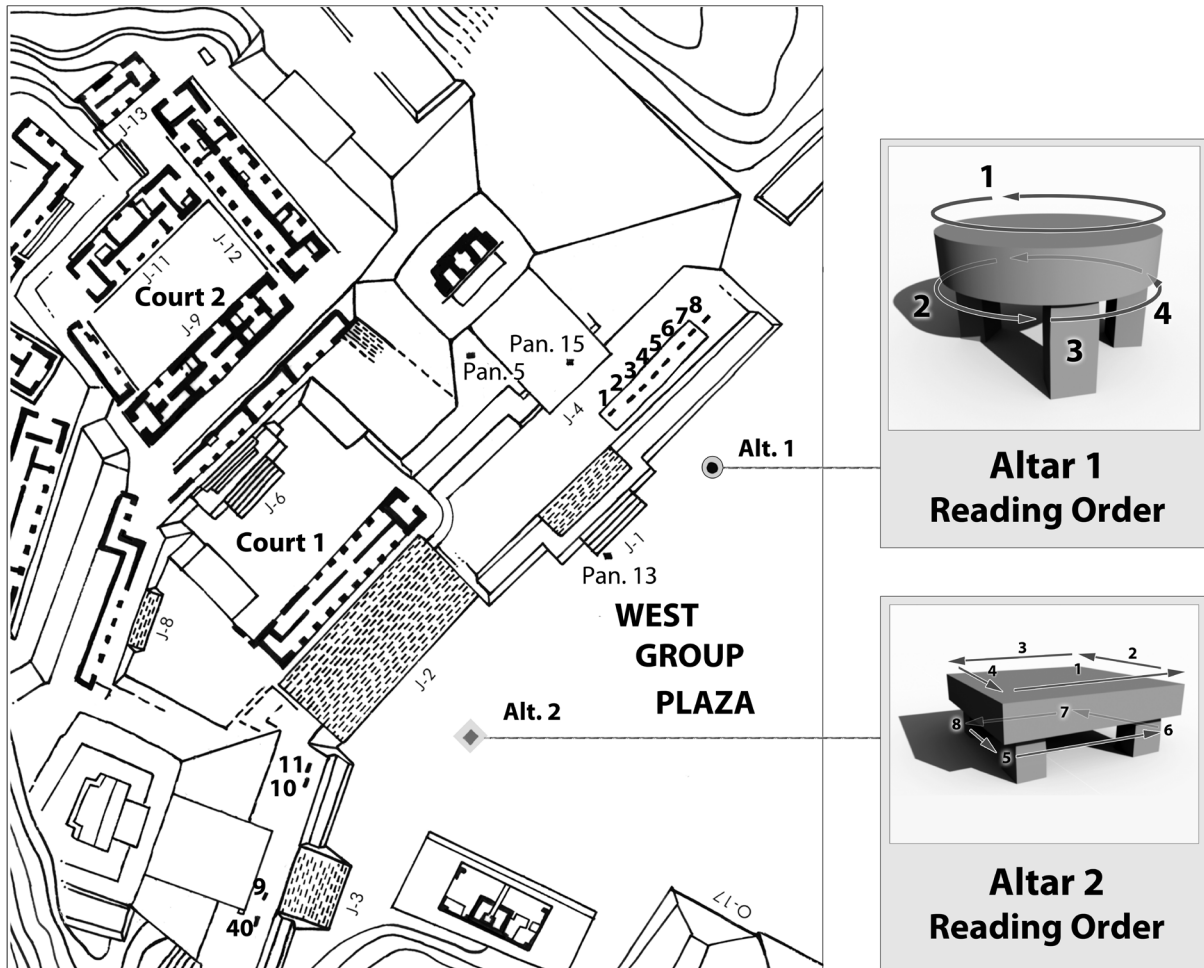


Figure 2.22. Plan of Piedras Negras West Group Plaza, ca. 8th century, showing Altars 1 and 2 and direction of movement around them. Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by Kevin Cain. Three-dimensional models of altars by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT.

events, as the rulers emulate and re-create paradigmatic events of the deep mythological past.

This recounting of repeating cycles of time that are commemorated and witnessed by people and deities correlates with the monument's physical format, the composition of its image and texts in nested circles, and the circumambulatory path around it. With this altar, then, the experience of reading, viewing, and performance come together, and all three are essential to the celebration of world creation and renewal.

Houston, Escobedo, and their collaborators have argued that at Piedras Negras, 9.13.0.0.0, Altar 1's probable dedication date, was a significant period ending.²⁰ They suggest the date was marked with especially grand commissions, including

a dramatic reorganization of the city involving the construction of a new version of the West Group Plaza and the creation of processional causeways across the site (Houston and Escobedo 2001:613–14; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:100–103; Houston, Escobedo, Terry, et al. 2000:10–11). If this proposition is correct, not only Altar 1 but also a magnificent new plaza and urban plan were dedicated and celebrated amid grand festivities involving world renewal. Altar 1 was a fitting commemoration of this momentous period ending.

Sixty years later, on 9.16.0.0.0 (5 May 751 CE), Itzam K'an Ahk II—K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's successor—erected Altar 2 on the West Group Plaza. It was set in front of the Structure J-2 stairway and to the southwest of Altar 1 (figs. 2.22, 2.23). Altar 2 has a rectangular tabletop on four legs. As with Altar 1, its reading order requires counterclockwise movement, most probably in two circuits around the altar. The inscription begins on the southeast face of the table's periphery; although most of the inscription is eroded, it appears to have run counterclockwise around the altar to each of the tabletop's sides (Morley 1937–38, 3:205–207). The inscriptions on the wide outer faces of the altar supports were well preserved and mark another counterclockwise route, beginning on the south support and moving to the east, north, and west. As with Altar 1, reading the text on the tabletop and altar supports requires at least two circuits around the altar.

Altar 2's time span is more focused than Altar 1's and is fully within Itzam K'an Ahk II's life, recounting his birth, his accession, and a series of period endings he celebrated during his reign. Nonetheless, Altar 2 follows the form, content, and viewer experience of Altar 1, both in celebrating more than one period ending—in a gesture to the cyclical nature of time—and by guiding the reader or performer to move counterclockwise around the monument. For those allowed to move around these altars and stelae, reading the text was a physical act. The sculptures guided bodies to move around them and enact ritual circumambulation, turning reading and looking into a religious practice.

Looper (2001:115, 120–21, 128–31) has hypothesized counterclockwise performance of sculptures at Quiriguá. He characterizes the quadrilateral placement of five stelae (Stelae A, C, D, E, and F) and one ceremonial throne (Zoomorph B), all dedicated by K'ahk' Tiliw Chan Yopaat between 761 and 780 CE on Platform 1A-1, as “an abstract map of the cosmos.” He further proposes that the texts and images on the individual monuments, and the larger arrangement of stelae, guided performers through space, potentially in a counterclockwise path, during period ending festivals associated with the renewal of time and the cosmos. Looper affirms, moreover, that the content of the stelae texts is in accord with world renewal. Like Piedras Negras Altar 1, they narrate the contemporary period endings and their relation to earlier historic period endings and the 13.0.0.0.0 creation date (Looper 2001:130).²¹

There is evidence for circular—both counterclockwise and clockwise—arrangements and performances for other types of stone sculptures, sculptural groupings, and architectural complexes at other Classic Maya sites as well. For example, Patricia McAnany and Shannon Plank (2001:116–17) have observed the use of circular forms at Yaxchilán in the compositions of the images carved on the Structure 23 lintels, contending that their circular, counterclockwise circuits of looking—starting in the east and moving to the north, west, and south—correspond to movements of the sun. In addition, Reese-Taylor (2002:146–47) has found indications of counterclock-



Figure 2.23. Piedras Negras Altar 2, limestone, 751 CE. Photograph ca. 1929–57, Carnegie Institute of Washington. CIW Photo #H-21-5-105. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #58-34-20/66168. Digital File #CI030116.

wise ritual circumambulations among architectural complexes at Cerros, Uaxactún, and Tikal. I also hypothesize a clockwise reading order and processional route for the sixth-century lintels reset in Yaxchilán's eighth-century Structure 12, which I attribute to the commemoration and performance of cycles of time, history, and memory (O'Neil 2011).

Sculptural formats and the performance of sculptures at Piedras Negras, Quiriguá, and elsewhere remind us of the fundamentally religious nature of Maya sculptures, whose dedications on period endings repeated and renewed paradigmatic events of world creation. Such renewal took place through things and places that commemorated cycles of time and encouraged movement around and among them. In these cases and others, form was fundamental to the experience and meaning of sculptures, sculptural groupings, and architectural complexes, both inherently—in what they modeled and actualized—and in how they prompted people to re-create paradigmatic cosmogonic forms and events, as discussed in the following section.

Counterclockwise Movement among the Maya across Time

A comparison with stories and practices of the colonial and modern Maya may supplement the evidence for circumambulatory performance among the ancient Maya. Accounts of counterclockwise movement exist in myths of world creation and ceremonies of world renewal in sources from Maya groups across a large geographical and chronological range, including the Yucatec Maya in the colonial period and the Ch'orti, Tzotzil, and Yucatec Maya in the twentieth century.

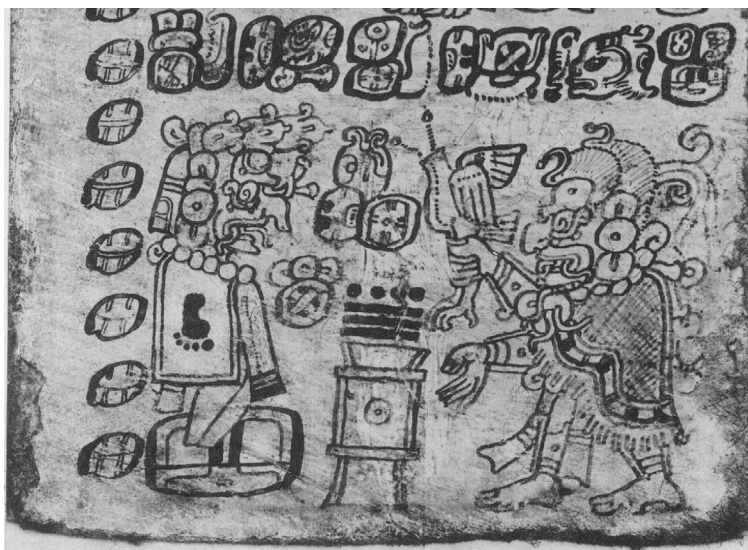
In multiple colonial-period Yucatec sources, including the *Chilam Balam* accounts, the space and time of the world are created after the cosmic flood through the erection of five trees in the four cardinal directions and the center of the world. The raising of trees occurs in a counterclockwise direction, beginning in the east and moving to the north, west, south, and center. In each place, a tree of a particular color—red, white, black, yellow, and green—is set. These trees, as bearers of the sky, are analogous to the four *bacabs* that Diego de Landa describes as having been placed at the four points of the sky to hold it up “so that it should not fall” after the flood (Tozzer 1941:135–36). Other elements—including stones and birds—in corresponding colors appear at each of the directions and are listed in the same counterclockwise order as the trees.

In the *Chilam Balam of Chumayel*, for instance, after the destruction of the world by floods, or “a sudden rush of water” that caused the sky to “fall down upon the earth,” a series of trees was erected (Roys 1967:99–100). In this account, the name of the first tree is missing, but the *Chilam Balam of Maní* recounts that “after this cataclysm the red Imix tree was erected,” a sign of dawn (Craine and Reindorp 1979:119). In the Chumayel account, the Imix trees are referred to as pillars of the sky, *yocmal caan*, and in both the Chumayel and Maní books, the trees are erected at each cardinal direction in counterclockwise order, with the last at the world's center: the red Imix tree in the east, the white to the north, the black to the west, the yellow to the south, and the green in the center (Craine and Reindorp 1979:118–19; Roys 1967:33, 99–100).

According to Taube, a corresponding account of world destruction and the subsequent tree erection appears in the *Dresden Codex*, a pre-Hispanic Maya screenfold book made of bark from the *amate* (wild fig) tree. Taube (1988b:219–20) compares the *Chilam Balam* stories to the flood on page 74 of the *Dresden Codex* and the scenes of deities making offerings to trees in the four cardinal directions on the codex's new year pages, pages 25–28 (fig. 2.24). Although they are separated in the codex, Taube argues that they belong together—and that the flood page is integral to the new-year pages and should precede them.

The erection of and offerings to these trees in the *Dresden Codex* take place according to a circuit that moves through space and time, similar to the erection of trees in the *Chilam Balam* accounts. Taube (1988b:239–40) further observes that the bottom register of each new-year page shows a deity making an offering to a tree. Three trees show stone-markings on their shafts; the fourth tree, situated in the east, is dressed in clothing and jewelry and has the head of the deity Chahk. Each tree is associated with a cardinal direction, beginning with the east, where the tree is named *chac itzam che*, the *chac* (red) name correlating with the red Imix tree from the *Chilam Balam* accounts. The others are all named *yax itzam che*, identifying

Figure 2.24. *Dresden Codex*, 25c (Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden Mscr. Dresd. R 310). Photograph of Ernst Förstemann facsimile by Linda Schele, © David Schele, courtesy Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org.



them as *yax* (meaning first, precious, or the color blue-green), with no stated color variation among them. The subsequent ceremonies of tree offerings take place in the south, west, and north and thereby move through space, comparable to the other stories of tree erection, comprising, according to Taube (1988b:265), a “model and diagram of the world.” Their erection proceeds in a clockwise direction.²²

Taube (1988b:239) also affirms that the trees in the *Dresden Codex* are marked with stone signs, and that the verb used may be the same as the *ts’ap* (“plant”) verb found in some dedication statements on Classic period stelae (see also Grube 1990; Stuart 1996:153–54; 1998a:375). The *Dresden*’s trees and the Classic period stelae may be analogous, and the planting of stelae recalls or reenacts the paradigmatic erection of trees at creation (Taube 1988b:239, 241; see also Newsome 1998:130). The circular, counterclockwise movement around each stela that I have described also correlates with the counterclockwise erection of trees at creation and would have been one way the Classic Maya performed and enacted world renewal.

Other colonial-period accounts also make reference to counterclockwise movement in calendrical ceremonies. In the sixteenth-century *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán*, for example, Diego de Landa described new year ceremonies during the *Uayeb*, the five unlucky days before the start of the new year; these ceremonies were intended to stave off calamity and misfortune (Tozzer 1941:136). Landa described the ceremonies for each set of *Uayeb* days over a cycle of four years; especially important are the associations of particular years with cardinal directions and colors. Over the years, the cycle moves counterclockwise through space—south, east, north, and west—and the colors are the same as in the *Chilam Balam* accounts: yellow, red, white, and black, respectively (M. Coe 1965:99–102; Tozzer 1941:135–50).

Each set of *Uayeb* ceremonies comprised various activities, including the making of clay figures and “statues” of gods, to which the Maya priests and noblemen made offerings of maize, incense, and food. In addition, they let blood from their ears and used it to anoint each *acantun*—or “set-up stone.” The set-up stones were of varying colors, that is, yellow, red, white, or black, depending on the year and cardinal direc-

tion (Tozzer 1941:139–41; see also Newsome 2001:206). These activities took place in the house of an official in town. On the edge of town, ceremonial participants placed deity figures and statues on the special heaps of stones in the direction corresponding to the given year (M. Coe 1965:100; Tozzer 1941:140). Finally, one of the first activities of the new year—on the first day of the month *Pohp*—was to renew “all the objects which they made use of, such as plates, vessels, stools, mats and old clothes and the stuffs with which they wrapped their idols” (Tozzer 1941:151).

These actions were undertaken at the transition between old year and new and served not only to prevent calamity—as Landa mentioned—but also to re-create sacred space and renew the world and the local community. According to Taube (1998b:298–99), in contrast to the dangerous Uayeb days, the first day of the new year comprises “a return to order, and the re-creation of sacred space by the chacs surely marks not only the purification of a particular courtyard but also the community, the fields, and the world.”

Among various Maya groups in the twentieth century, ritual practices, dances, and other performances also often include counterclockwise movement. For example, regarding the Tzotzil Maya of San Juan Chamula (Chiapas, Mexico), Gossen (1972:140) points to “the overwhelming tendency of almost all Chamula ritual motion to follow a counterclockwise pattern” as a way to “move as the sun moves.” Gossen hypothesizes that the counterclockwise movement—proceeding to the right—relates to the sun because it “is the horizontal equivalent of the sun’s daily vertical path across the heavens from east to west.”

Counterclockwise movement also plays an important role in the Chamula Festival of Games, a commemoration of world destruction and renewal that takes place over five days, including Catholic Ash Wednesday and the four preceding days (Gossen 1986; see also Looper 2001:115). Gossen (1986:229) compares the Festival of Games to a mythical narrative of the death and rebirth of the Sun/Christ, in which the episodes of the perceived motion of the sun follow a counterclockwise pattern, beginning in the west and moving through the inter-cardinal and cardinal directions and ending in the universe’s northwestern quadrant, close to where the sun started. Gossen (1986:229) notes that with such a sequence, “the categories of time, space, and cosmic order are established in the beginning of Creation.”

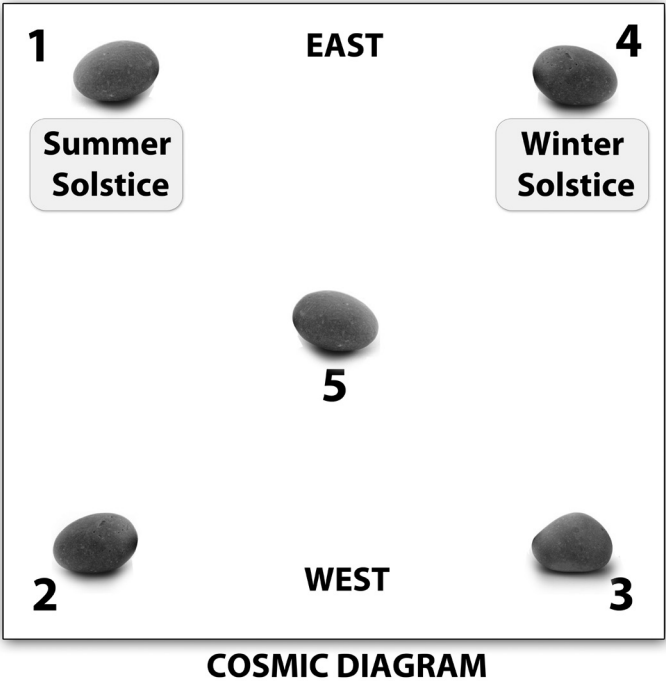
Analogous counterclockwise circular movement is used in at least one part of the festival’s rites, on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, when the entourages of the Passions, the custodians of the sun, run around the plaza three times counterclockwise before performing the fire-walk on the trail of burning thatch across the plaza’s east–west axis, which symbolizes the sun’s ascent across the sky (Gossen 1986:232, 246–47). The counterclockwise circling of the plaza correlates with the sun’s path in the first-creation myth and is a fundamental part of renewal for the sun, the world, and the Chamula community.

Mid-twentieth century accounts of new-year world-renewal ceremonies of the Ch’orti’ Maya of southeastern Guatemala also rely on counterclockwise movement, particularly in priests’ placement of five specially selected stones in a quincunx pattern on an altar to create the sacred cosmogram. According to Rafael Girard (1966:29), the Ch’orti’ Maya considered the action of placing the stones in the cosmogram as a commemoration and repetition of the primordial act of world creation; this cosmogram did not simply represent the world but became the world itself.

Figure 2.25. Ch'orti' Maya cosmogram made of five stones on an altar. Photograph by Rafael Girard (1962, plate 27). Courtesy of Dora Luna de Girard.



Figure 2.26. Diagram of the order of stone placement in the Ch'orti' Maya cosmogram. Redrawn by the author and Kevin Cain after diagram by Rafael Girard (1962:40).



Girard (1962:40) observes that the priests were careful to place the five stones in counterclockwise order, which he interprets as following the sun's perceived path, particularly in relation to the summer and winter solstices. In his diagram, the stones are placed at the inter-cardinal points in counterclockwise order: northeast, northwest, southwest, and southeast, and then center (figs. 2.25, 2.26). This stone placement, moving through time and space counterclockwise and thereby re-creating and renewing the world, is analogous to the counterclockwise erection of trees in the *Chilam Balam* and other colonial-period accounts. As Girard notes, this rite was a culmination of a series of actions and prayers for the new year, when the gods would be awakened—or reborn—to act anew (Girard 1962:21, 39).

Counterclockwise movement is also seen among the Yucatec Maya in the twentieth century. Hanks (1990:244), for example, describes the counterclockwise calling of gods to bind altars before rites begin. The verb used is *k'aš* (or *k'ax*)—to tie, lash, or bind. This action, he writes, makes the spirits present around the altar. According to Hanks (1990:336–37), the spirits are called and lowered to the altar in the order of their locations at the cardinal directions. In the opening phases of the rite, they are called in counterclockwise order, beginning in the east and proceeding to the west, south, and center. This is referred to as *he'ik b'èel* “opening the road,” or *k'ašik m'èesa* “binding the altar.”²³ Hanks characterizes this calling of the spirits as an act of centering that produces “a centered space out of an absolute one.” He also describes the counterclockwise ordering and binding of the altar as actions through which “the performance space itself is constituted as a zone of proximal copresence of a shaman, patient, and the spiritual lords” (Hanks 1990:351).

In summary, examples of circular—usually counterclockwise—patterns of motion appear in creation myths and renewal ceremonies from across the Maya world, from the *Dresden Codex* new-year pages to colonial-period Yucatec creation myths to twentieth-century Tzotzil, Ch'orti', and Yucatec performances and rites. These are analogous to what we see in Classic period Maya monumental stone sculptures for the guiding of circular, often counterclockwise, motion around sculptures as part of world renewal rites and remembrances. The twentieth-century Yucatec Maya binding of the altar through counterclockwise calling of spirits may be especially relevant in comparison to the Classic period dedication of stelae, for the *k'ašik m'èesa* phrase is analogous to *k'al tuun*, the most frequently used stela dedication phrase at Piedras Negras.

These examples cover an enormous span of space and time, and extensive differences across these periods make direct associations problematic. Furthermore, the particular rituals performed were not always the same. Even so, the similarities are powerful, and the ethnohistoric and ethnographic sources offer useful analogies to enrich our understanding of ancient Maya religion and the potential for performance and ceremony to activate objects and spaces in the ancient past.

In short, texts were carved on Piedras Negras sculptures in formats requiring a person to circumambulate the monuments to read the texts, and I propose that this movement was a sacred act fundamental to their dedication. Although private reading, looking, and movement may have taken place, it is likely that textual recitations were more common. Performers could have read texts aloud while moving around the monument, and the circumambulation could have been an integral part of a religious rite, with the audience both in the public spaces of the plazas and the more

secluded spaces of the palace and other buildings. Such recitation may have been a fundamental part of the monuments' ritual activation, comparable to the songs that the twentieth-century Lacandon Maya of Nahá (Chiapas, Mexico) sang in the renewal ceremonies for their incense burners. As Virginia Dale Davis explained, these songs were intended to "awaken" the vessels and invoke them to open their eyes, to see, hear, and get up (1978:77, 82).

It is conceivable that the elaboration of the Classic period monuments constituted a sacred practice amid rites comparable to the prayers, fasting, and other procedural prescriptions surrounding the creation of wood effigies by the sixteenth-century Yucatec Maya (Tozzer 1941:159–61). Performances in counterclockwise motion around the monuments could have happened while the monuments were carved, during dedication and new year ceremonies, and as part of world renewal rituals. The movement of these performers, guided by the monuments' physical design, recreated and renewed the world. Alternatively, the circular formats of the reading order of the inscriptions may have themselves materialized this circumambulation, embodying the cyclicity of time and world renewal through their material presence.

The guiding of circular movement around Maya stelae as a dedicatory action is also comparable to the dedicatory texts painted on some Maya ceramic vessels (Stuart 1995:99–100). Usually, this text is painted around the vessel's upper rim and encircles it, and the last glyph meets the first in a continuous band. Practices of painting and reading required the painter or user to turn the vessel, and the physical act of turning may have been meaningful in the object's sanctification. As with stelae, the circular process of reading texts on vessels may differ from looking at images, whose multi-figural scenes with complex pictorial narratives encourage handlers to turn the vessels back and forth. The differing forms of looking, reading, and movement were not contradictory but instead were compatible amid the varied possibilities of viewing.



Figure 2.27. Fallen Piedras Negras Stela 7, limestone, 721 CE, with the text visible on its top and right side. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Image #175930.

Unseen Texts

Despite the focus thus far on visible texts and images and how they could have guided movement, some carved texts and images are on top of monuments where people on the ground could not have seen them once the monuments were erected. For example, on the top of Itzam K'an Ahk I's Stela 32 is a text naming 6 Ajaw, the stela's dedication day. Although it might have been visible to someone at the top of the Structure R-5 pyramid, this glyph probably was not meant to be seen by people, but its presence was still important. Other examples are K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Stela 2, with a text and an image of an ancestor on a throne carved on the top, and his Stela 7, with a text that curves from the top of the stela down its right side (fig. 2.27).

Although the visibility of texts and images has been emphasized in this chapter, it is abundantly clear that texts and images had other purposes outside of their availability for comprehension. Houston, Escobedo, and Webster (2008) have suggested that the "audience" for texts on the tops of stelae was divine, and that they were carved for deities or deified ancestors in the celestial realm. Alternatively, the act of carving itself may have been the critical practice, or the presence of the texts and images may have been what truly mattered. Regardless, these examples further remind us that stelae did much more than simply convey information, for as Stuart (1996) first proposed, the ceremonies of their dedication were of utmost import, as was their presence as the embodiment of divine rulers.

The physical qualities and context of sculptures were also of enormous significance. This is clear for objects with texts and images that people could actively see and experience, in which the layouts guided people to move around the monument, particularly in cases where there is integration of what the text conveyed and how it was deployed, as described for Altar 1. It also becomes clear for texts and images that were hidden from human sight but still significant in their existence and materiality. Moreover, strong indications exist that Maya sculptures were considered active objects with agency that could function outside of human experience or perception, one notable example being the sarcophagus of Pakal at Palenque, which—buried inside a temple and thus invisible to humans—materialized and activated Pakal's rebirth (see O'Neil 2009).

Conclusion

As I have argued in this chapter, Maya sculptures would have encouraged people to engage with them through both optic and kinetic experiences. Although the political value of Classic Maya sculptures as symbols of power is often emphasized, their religious significance is fundamental, for they not only portray divine rulers but also may have embodied them and held their sacred, vital essence.

Across the span of sculptural production at Piedras Negras, sculptors experimented with strategies and techniques to carve limestone into forms and images that both established continuity with the past and pushed the medium to increase the living qualities and interactive features of sculptures. These monuments expressed and enacted narrative, both on their carved surfaces and in their strategic placement in relation to people and to other sculptures. Indeed, the deployment of images, texts, compositions, and material qualities described in this chapter

were not necessarily about increasing realism as an artistic feat, although they may have done this, but more about making explicit the living qualities of sculptures and about inviting engagement with or reverence for—if not fear of—these divine things and the *k'uhul ajaw* they embodied.

Sculptors strove, for example, to increase the depth of carved reliefs, primarily of the ruler's body, to present an image of the ruler that could hold his vital essence. At the same time, sculptors developed strategies to portray other important personages—wives, mothers, and local or visiting nobles—interacting with the ruler. The varying placement of their likenesses on monuments' fronts, sides, or backs produced differing results related to three-dimensional illusion and the guiding of movement. Furthermore, the placement of these subsidiary figures' portraits in relation to living viewers also performed a mediating role by inciting people to witness or make offerings to the divine ruler embodied in the stone—or, alternatively, to experience the vulnerability of the captive.

Piedras Negras sculptures also mediated between humans and the divine by encouraging the performance of sacred processions. As argued in this chapter, the arrangement of texts on these monuments established counterclockwise circuits around stelae and altars that guided people to circumambulate them, a form of sacred procession among the Maya from the Classic period until today. These processional circuits emulated and enacted temporal and cosmic renewal and aligned with references to creation and renewal inherent in the monuments' dedications.

Piedras Negras sculptures engaged with the social and cultural meanings of spaces in the built environment, including throne rooms, shrines, pyramids, and plazas. They contributed to enlivening those spaces, providing opportunity and inspiration for performance and reflecting or defining the ceremonially and socially charged physical spaces of Maya cities. These spaces, in turn, influenced the legibility, reception, and performance of the stone monuments, whether by affording or limiting visibility and access to them, or by guiding how they were experienced. Moreover, the experience and performance of spectators, dancers, and ritual participants would have modulated the meanings of the monuments and architectural spaces as well.

Sculptural Dialogues across Time and Space

While individual monuments at Piedras Negras reflected and shaped the spaces they occupied, they were neither isolated in space nor frozen in time. Each ruler dedicated stelae for multiple hotun and k'atun endings during his lifetime, and the stelae remained standing after a ruler died and his successors acceded to power. Over time, sculptures of previous rulers stayed current and vital, and newer sculptures of later dynasts emulated and were physically oriented toward their predecessors' monuments. These orientations created relationships among sculptures and affected what the sculptures were, how they functioned, and how people experienced them. When multiple sculptures were clustered together, their relationships changed over time and produced new meanings beyond what individual sculptures may have conveyed. This chapter continues the discussions initiated in chapter 2 about sculptural activation and viewer experience, here focusing on relationships among sculptures and people's experience of them in multiples.

As discussed earlier, Stuart and Houston have argued that the Classic period Maya may have thought of stelae as holding the divine essence of rulers (Stuart 1996; Houston and Stuart 1998). Adding to their hypotheses, I contend that when these sculptures were placed across from each other and in other physical orientations, they were perceived to engage with one another, with older sculptures witnessing and validating the presence and ceremonial performances of living successors and their sculptural embodiments. These associations across sculptures and generations of rulers also commemorated the past and emphasized connections among people and moments in time.

The physical relationships among sculptures also affected how people experienced them. Interrelated monuments created tableaux into which people could be situated. In addition, the site's layout suggests that people activated the implied relationships between stelae by moving among them, in procession or otherwise, both within architectural groups and along pathways connecting the South, East, and West Plazas. Adding to chapter 2's analyses, I propose that the viewing of Piedras Negras sculptures was demonstrably kinetic and involved individual and multiple sculptures, buildings, plazas, causeways, and other elements of the built environment.

People experiencing monuments in multiples could produce expanded narratives of memory and history with them. Most Piedras Negras stela texts are comparable in content and form, for they usually commemorate hotun endings and narrate events in their respective patrons' lives. The stelae's visual and physical associations established an environment in which comparable textual structures, chronologies, and narratives could be overlaid, allowing the suggestion of correlations between rulers

from different generations. These cross-sculptural narratives are analogous to texts on single sculptures—such as Altar 1—that juxtapose multiple calendrical period endings and the rulers who commemorated them.

At a more basic level, multiple monuments establish a series. With the dedication of multiple stelae in visual and physical relationships within and across reigns, the Piedras Negras Maya serialized each ruler's image and presence. Each ruler dedicated his stelae during religious ceremonies on successive calendar endings, leading not to simple repetition but to an essential and meaningful serialization, in which the multiplicity and variation of monuments installed in physical relation to one another became an important part of their meaning. Juxtaposed with other stelae from the same ruler, they suggested renewal and continuity.

Over time, these groupings of a single ruler became parallel to—and subsumed within—the longer-term serialization of successive rulers' monument sets. These were clustered according to reign and thereby materially displayed the continuity and cyclicity of rulership over the centuries. The repetition and clustering showed each ruler's reign to be part of a larger structure of birth, death, and regeneration. Meaning thus was conveyed not only in the content of the carved texts or images but also in the monuments' materiality, particularly in their multiplicity, clustering, and orientation, which together conveyed repetition, continuity, and renewal, regardless of—but actually in concert with—their images and texts. This chapter, then, addresses the materiality of the monuments in tandem with their narrations as a means to explore the relationships among monuments and rulers in the physical spaces of Late Classic Piedras Negras.

Ancestral Dialogues

A consideration of Maya sculptures over time—and not just at the moment of their creation—is a central concern of this chapter, for the stone monuments inevitably were transformed as the rulers they embodied died and became divine ancestors and as newer sculptures were erected in relation to old ones. Many stelae were physically changed: their eyes, noses, mouths, or any combination of the three were pecked out or broken off. These actions appear to have been relatively careful and reverential (fig. 3.1). Houston, Stuart, and Taube (Houston and Stuart 1998:88; Houston, Stuart, and Taube 2006:76) suggest the pecking out of eyes on Maya sculptures prevented the sculptures from seeing by destroying “the field-of-view of a person and the vigilant gaze of a god-king.” These facial modifications, in fact, are among the evidence they marshal to contend that ancient stelae were not inert things but living embodiments of rulers. In a related argument, Bryan Just (2005:78) has observed that on Copán stelae, the noses were often destroyed; he interprets this act as the destruction of a monument's ability to breathe and the deactivation of its role as a “vessel for the vital essence of the depicted.” Nevertheless, Just (2005:78) suggests these monuments still had a social role, potentially as “memorials to their stone protagonists, the legitimacy of the ruling lineage, and the history of the city.”

These facial modifications did not destroy the monuments, but they did signal changed circumstances. This is analogous to how Jaš Elsner (2003) theorizes the destruction and fragmentation of monuments and buildings in ancient Rome and in England during the Protestant Reformation. Elsner argues that visible evidence



Figure 3.1. Rulers' faces on Piedras Negras Stelae 26, 35, 8, and 14.

a. Stela 26, detail of photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #2004.29.7562. Digital File #98790013. b. Stela 35. Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, Inventory #60333 or Sammlung Ludwig #SL/XXXIII. Detail of photo © Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, rba_c023101. c. Stela 8, detail of photograph with combined images from Teobert Maler (1901) and Ian Graham, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 43, Stuart and Graham (2003), Peabody Museum Press. d. Stela 14. Penn Museum Object #L-16-382. Detail of photograph by Night Fire Films. Courtesy of Night Fire Films and the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala.

of defacement, fragmentation, or recarving can signify or spur memory because viewing them inspires or produces “two-directional” interpretation,” in which the material form points to the previous and current states of the monument—unaltered and altered—and to the historical, social, and cultural contexts surrounding both iterations. At Piedras Negras, the marks from the pecking of sculptures’ faces could have inspired two-directional interpretation and contemplation of the associated transformation of a ruler into an ancestor.

But despite these changes, at Piedras Negras it is clear that the monuments continued to be vital, current, and relevant. Indeed, they were left visible and became loci for communication with personages from the past: newer sculptures, by repeating motifs and forms from older sculptures, emulated those monuments and were oriented toward them. I contend that these relationships promoted dialogue between the monuments and stimulated the viewing of multiple sculptures together.

Such dialogues among sculptures correlate with what we know of Classic Maya ancestor veneration and how the Maya invoked tradition and links to the past for religious, political, and economic purposes, a topic Patricia McAnany (1995) has

discussed. Classic period Maya rulers made connections to ancestors in a variety of ways. For instance, rulers used stone sculpture to create and display their familial pedigrees and associations with ancestors. In fact, hieroglyphic texts frequently included rulers' parentage statements and juxtaposed persons and events from different moments in time. Maya rulers also chose certain dates for events and ceremonies precisely because they were anniversaries of events in predecessors' biographies, and some ceremonies were explicitly dedicated to ancestors (Fitzsimmons 1998).

Piedras Negras rulers also made material connections with ancestors by erecting stelae at their predecessors' funerary pyramids. The ancestor's tomb became the seed of the new reign, and the new ruler's sculptures sprouted from the ancestor's burial hill. The funerary pyramid was a place where the ancestor's presence would have been palpable, for supplicants evoked the ancestor's memory through ceremonies, offerings, and burning at his tomb (Escobedo 2004; Fitzsimmons 1998, 2009:142–69; Houston, Escobedo, Scherer, et al. 2003; Stuart 1998a:396–99).

In addition, upon their inaugurations, Classic period rulers often took names of their ancestors. Robert Carlsen and Martín Prechtel (1991:26–29) describe an analogous custom of the twentieth-century K'iche' and Tz'utujil Maya of naming a grandchild after a grandparent, and they explain that the repeating of names relates to the rebirth or regeneration of an ancestor's life essence in a descendant. Susan Gillespie (2002:68, 71–72) hypothesizes that Classic period Maya naming patterns indicate a comparable belief in the regeneration of the soul. Emulation of sculptural forms and images at Piedras Negras was another means of making and displaying associations across generations, and the affinities among monuments may also have implied the regeneration of souls.

The Classic Maya of the southern lowlands also made contact with ancestors by making them visible through representation. McNally (1995:39–47, 1998), Houston and Stuart (1996), O'Neil (2005:129–82), Tate (1992:59–62, 66–67), and Taube (2004a), among others, have explored the various ways the Maya portrayed ancestors on stone sculptures. At some sites, ancestors' images appear on sculptures in association with reigning rulers for occasions such as accessions or celebrations of period endings. Ancestors were shown either in a transformed state, often with aspects of a particular deity, or as if alive. In either case, the ancestor's presence offered legitimacy and validation for the living ruler. On Early Classic sculptures from the Tikal region such as Tikal Stela 31, for example, an ancestor could appear as a downward-facing disembodied head—with or without a torso, and wreathed in volutes symbolizing smoke—that floats above a living ruler. Alternatively, ancestors were portrayed in cartouches signaling supernatural locations or passageways to and from other realms. At Yaxchilán, such cartouches frequently were in the upper register of stelae, which correlated with a celestial realm above the terrestrial realm and the reigning ruler (Tate 1992:98–101) (fig. 3.2).

Ancestors also were depicted in scenes as if alive and interacting with living people. These images usually portray a ruler with his parents or an earlier ruler and involve the transfer of power from one generation to another. The dynasty founder K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', for example, appears on Copán's Altar Q more than three hundred years after his death. In the scene, he hands a fiery scepter or burning dart to the sixteenth ruler—Yax Pasaj—upon his accession; images of the fourteen men who ruled Copán in the interim surround them and extend to the altar's

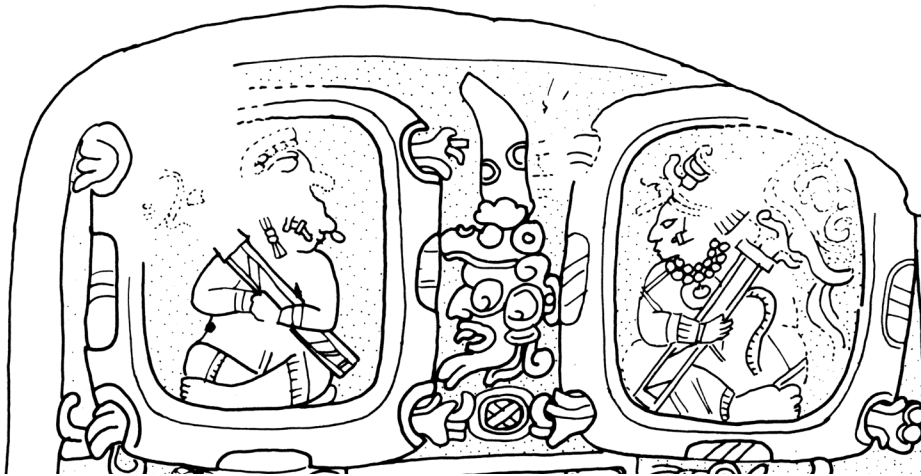


Figure 3.2. Yaxchilán Stela 10, temple side, upper portion, with the deceased parents of Bird Jaguar IV in cartouches. Detail of drawing by Carolyn Tate. Courtesy of Carolyn Tate.

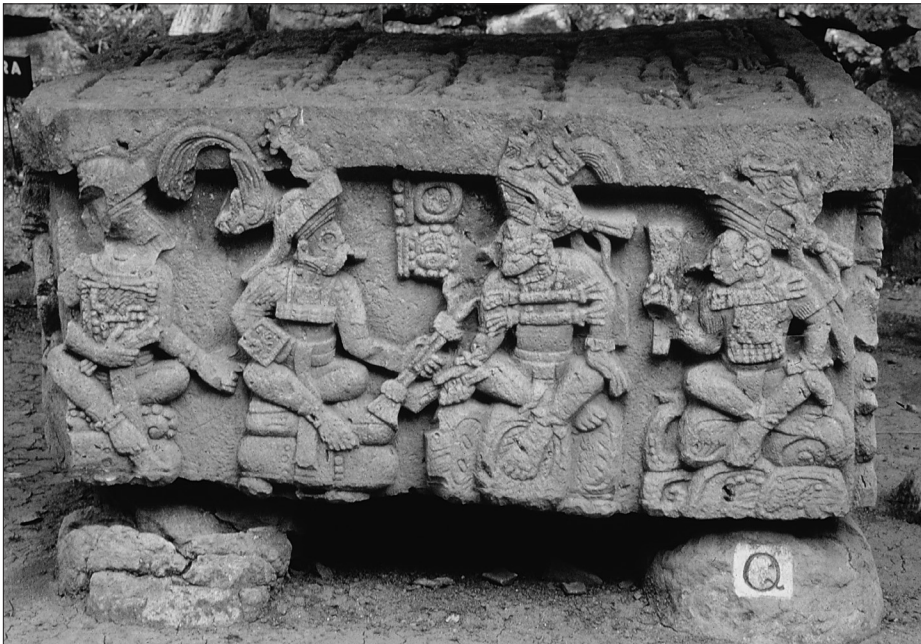


Figure 3.3. West side of Copán Altar Q, limestone. At center are the ancestor K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' and the reigning ruler Yax Pasaj. Photograph K7350 © Justin Kerr.

other three sides (Taube 2000:274, 2004b:266–68) (fig. 3.3). Similarly, at Palenque, K'inich Janaab Pakal was posthumously portrayed on multiple monuments. He is shown participating in ceremonies with his successors up to fifty-three years after his death (M. Miller and Martin 2004:232; Stuart 2007a:227–29) (fig. 3.4). Because of the power of and respect for ancestors, living rulers depended on visible connections with esteemed ancestors to validate their own rule.

Piedras Negras does have posthumous depictions of ancestors on Panels 2, 3, 4, and 15, but these were historical scenes that portrayed events and actors from the past; thus they are comparable to a modern history painting (fig. 3.5). Yaxchilán has

Figure 3.4. Upper portion of Palenque Palace Tablet, limestone. At left, the ancestor K'inich Janaab Pakal hands a headdress to the acceding ruler, K'inich K'an Joy Chitam. Drawing by Linda Schele, © David Schele, courtesy Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org.

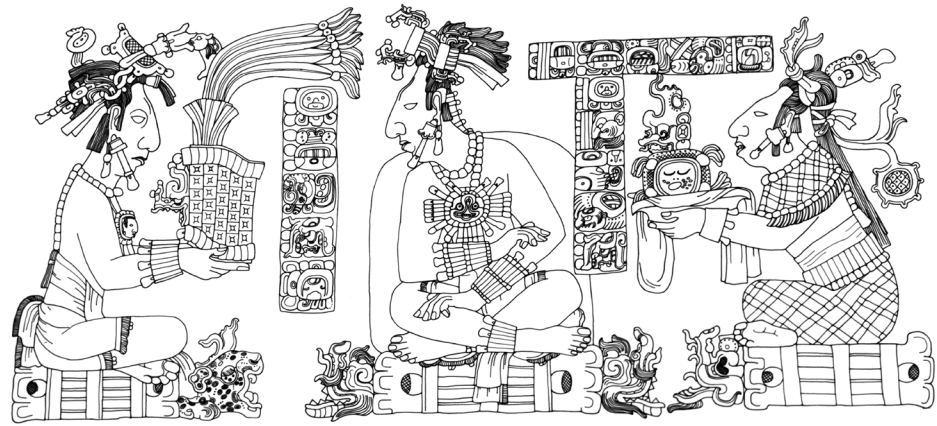


Figure 3.5. Posthumous depiction of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I (Ruler 1) on Piedras Negras Panel 4, limestone, 706 CE, from Structure R-5. It is a monument of his son, Itzam K'an Ahk I (Ruler 2). Photograph by author. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala.



analogous depictions of historical scenes; most come from the reign of Bird Jaguar IV and create a visible history of his ancestors (P. Mathews 1988:135, 155; Noble Bardsley 1994: 91; O'Neil 2005:157–82; Proskouria-koff 1963:163–64; Schele and Freidel 1990:272–76; Tate 1992:125–28, 133). Some at Yaxchilán lack explicit markers of having been created years after their given dates; the intent may have been to present them as legitimate documents or relics that were created in the past and carried authority from the past (O'Neil 2011). In contrast, the texts on the Piedras Negras panels cover long spans of time and recount events in the past but conclude in the present with living rulers performing rites at their ancestors' funerary pyramids.

The performance of ceremonies to commemorate ancestors is a repeating theme at Piedras Negras (Fitzsimmons 1998). These ceremonies were portrayed in images and narrated in texts, and they are recognizable in the archaeological record. Piedras Negras Stela 40 shows one of these ceremonies (fig. 3.6). Dedicated in 9.15.15.0.0.0 (31 May 746 CE), Stela 40 shows Itzam K'an Ahk II making an offering of *pom*, or copal incense, into a hole in the earth to an ancestor in a tomb below (Hammond 1981). The ancestor appears in the form of a mummy bundle and is named as female; she may be Itzam K'an Ahk II's mother (Stone 1989:168; Stuart, Houston, and Robertson 1999:209). The Stela 40 text makes reference to offerings to an ancestor as well (Schele and Grube 1995:105). The rites depicted in the image and narrated in the text on Stela 40 are analogous to the ones recorded on the Piedras Negras panels. These various pictorial and textual narratives are further indications of the importance of making ceremonial contact with ancestors and their material remains.

Piedras Negras has no depictions of ancestors interacting with living rulers in the manner seen at Tikal, Copán, and Palenque. The arrangements of stelae nevertheless created analogous displays of relationships among successors and their predecessors. The ancestors are physically embodied by their stelae, and in this form, they remained on view and available for interaction with other sculptures and living people. Newer stelae were juxtaposed with or oriented toward the ancestral stelae to produce cross-generational dialogue. Facing each other across physical spaces, across generations, and across time, the stelae functioned as tableaux



Figure 3.6. Piedras Negras Stela 40, limestone. Photograph by author. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala.

of enlivened sculptures looking toward each other, which made the ancestors and descendants materially and spiritually co-present to serve as witnesses to each other across time and space.

Words such as “emulation,” used to describe the practice of making monuments resemble those of predecessors’ through the copying of motifs, forms, or stylistic features, may imply a secular, formalistic art historical approach grounded only in production and intention. But looking at sources and influences among sculptures is only a starting point for an analysis of how visual references to other monuments may have functioned—both in stimulating viewing experiences and affecting later sculptural production. By considering the physical objects and their interrelation, we may explore possible roles of viewers in generating meaning through their interaction with objects. Indeed, the modeling of stelae after others may have had significant cultural resonance and implications for the Late Classic Maya at Piedras Negras. For instance, as described earlier, emulation or replication in images may have been another form of conveying intangible concepts of rebirth and regeneration across generations of rulers.

But even with such displays of connections, there was recognition of difference amid the sameness. First, none of the stelae were exactly the same; there were modifications and innovations with each new stela. Second, the new stelae did not replace those of the ancestors but remained in relationships with them, and each ascendant generation remained present to interact with or witness later generations. This conception of difference amid sameness is comparable to Classic period Maya rulers’ names as well, for they continued to use their pre-accession or personal names in tandem with the regnal names they adopted from their ancestors. In short, rulers and ancestors were shown to be alike but distinct, parallel, and co-present. Ancestors may have lived in the past but could occupy the present to witness their descendants. The persistence of their stelae may have been another material expression of their continuing presence.

Sculptural Tableaux and Series

The sculptures of Piedras Negras function together in several ways, including as tableaux and as series. An examination of sculptural groupings from other sites, how those sculptures worked together, and the ways people may have viewed or experienced them can shed light on how arrangements of stelae from different generations at Piedras Negras might have functioned.

The Classic Maya installed some sculptures in groups upon their creation. One example from Palenque is the assemblage of the Tablets of the Scribe and of the Orator, which were arranged in the palace flanking either side of a throne where the Tablet of the 96 Glyphs was set (Porter 1994) (fig. 3.7). Each tablet depicts a kneeling person who faces the other tablet and the living ruler enthroned between them. The man portrayed on the Tablet of the Scribe gestures toward the center, and the man on the Tablet of the Orator, identified as a captured Piedras Negras *sajal*, has a speech scroll emerging from his lips that connects to a second-person caption. The two figures thus communicate with each other and to the living, enthroned ruler (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008, citing Guenter and Zender 1999; Houston and Stuart 1998:88; Houston, Stuart, and Taube 2006:74–77).

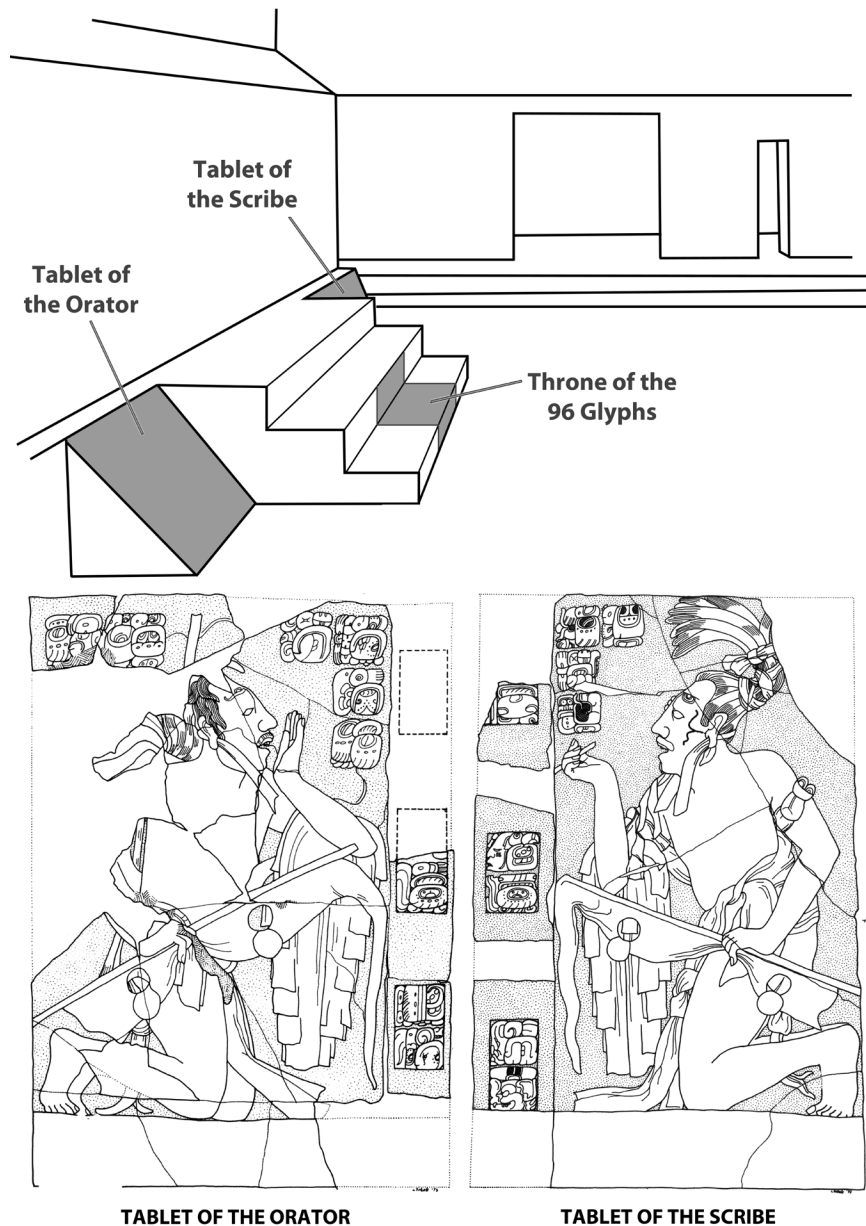


Figure 3.7. Palenque Tablets of the Orator and Scribe, limestone. Architectural reconstruction by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT, after Stephen D. Houston. Courtesy of Kevin Cain and Stephen D. Houston. Drawing of Tablets of the Orator and Scribe by Linda Schele, © David Schele, courtesy Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org.

A live, enthroned ruler thus became part of the sculptural tableau and further activated the dialogue between the sculptures. Another person—perhaps an adviser, visitor, penitent, captive, or performer—also may have participated by reciting the inscribed caption aloud to the enthroned ruler, thereby sharing the deferential role of the depicted captive. Cues in the panels—including hand gestures and speech captions, in tandem with their positioning—guided the sculptures' reception, and the participation of living people further activated these sculptures.

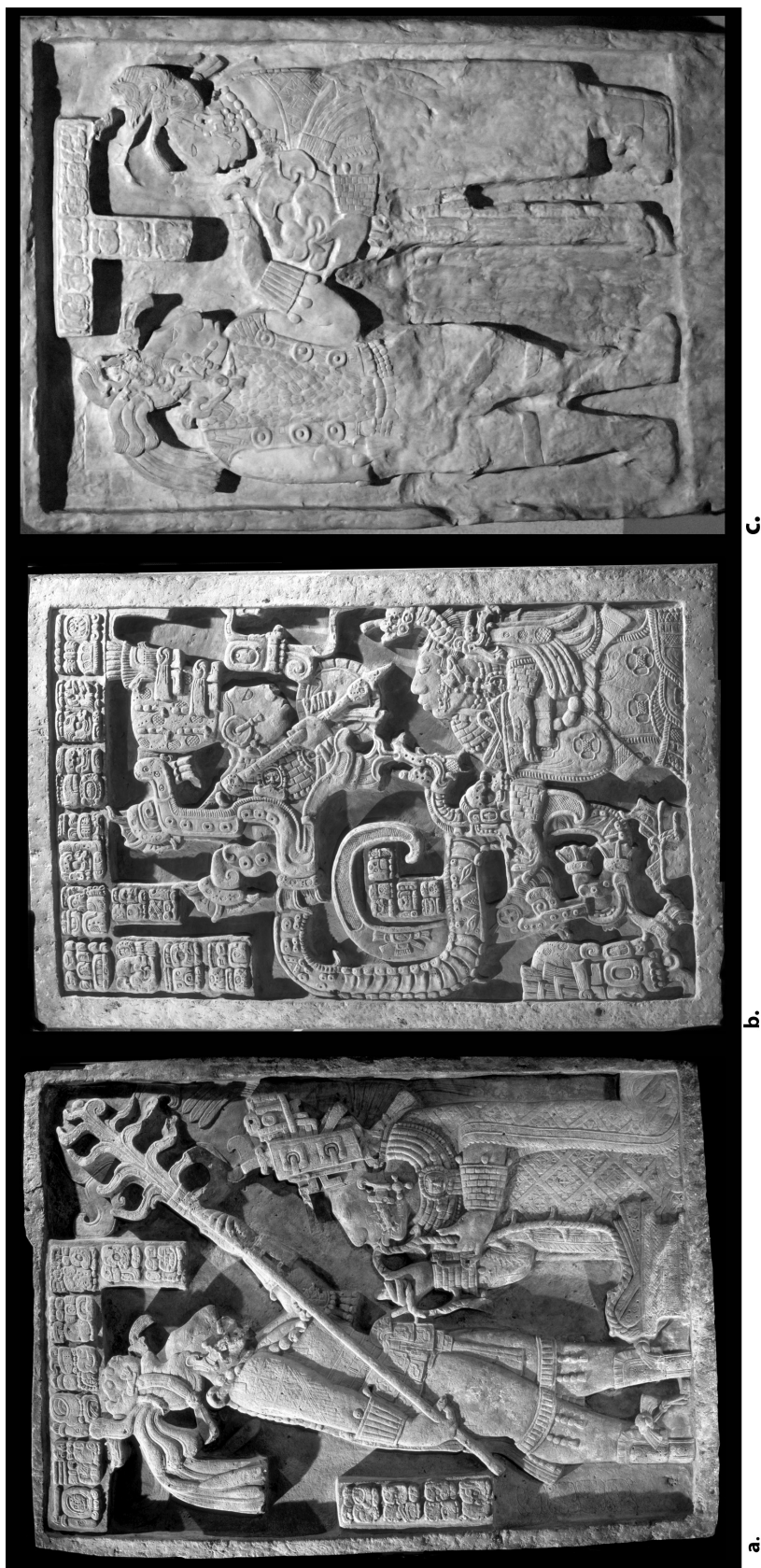


Figure 3.8. Yaxchilán lintels. a. Lintel 24. b. Lintel 25. c. Lintel 26. Lintel 24 photograph K2887 and Lintel 25 photograph K2888 ©Justin Kerr. Lintel 26 photograph by Thomas F. Aleto. Courtesy of Thomas F. Aleto. CONACULTA-INAH-MEX. Reproduction of Lintel 26 authorized by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

This assemblage makes explicit the interactive nature of Maya monuments. As argued in the previous chapter, some—if not all—sculptures impelled people to move, circumambulate, or do something else to interact with them. The Palenque assemblage may be a useful model for considering Piedras Negras sculptures and their engagement with one another. In some arrangements, the Piedras Negras monuments look toward one another and thus are located within the *y-ichnal*—or field of view—of other sculptures. Although Houston and Stuart (1998:88) have suggested that sculptures' fields of view were deactivated when their eyes were pecked out, the stela's physical arrangements suggest otherwise. The proximity and intervisibility of multiple stelae remained in the service of dialogue, witnessing, and validation, with the sculptures functioning as witnesses to other monuments within their *y-ichnal*. Moreover, the altered sculptures still were present for engagement with the people who, inspired by sculptures' physical qualities and interactive properties, stood before them, approached them, or walked around them.

Another type of multi-sculptural arrangement evokes episodes of a narrative over time. The eighth-century Yaxchilán Lintels 24, 25, and 26, for example, installed in the front doorways of Structure 23, relate a story whose complexity is revealed only upon considering the three lintels together (fig. 3.8). The lintels convey multiple episodes of a connected narrative in which Lady K'abal Xook lets blood, conjures the War Serpent, and gives a jaguar headdress and shield to her husband, Itzamnaaj Bahlam III. Each scene portrays a moment in a ceremony, and together they produce a narrative that unfolds across the sculptures. These could have taken place in sequence, for bloodletting may conjure the War Serpent who presents warfare implements that Lady K'abal Xook gives to her husband. However, the temporality of this account is extended when the texts of all three are read and seen together, for they specify that the rites took place on three occasions over forty-five years (Tate 1992:204–208).

In contrast to the Palenque assemblage of the Tablets of the Scribe and of the Orator, the Yaxchilán lintels form not a tableau but a series. They can be seen individually, but the material and presentational aspects of the three lintels—including their comparable sizes and installation in adjacent doorways—guide the viewing of them together. When read together, a larger narrative unfolds, such that their stories become more complex and expand across time. They remind us how important narrative and storytelling—both through texts and images—were for the Classic period Maya. Indeed, scribes and sculptors at Yaxchilán and elsewhere experimented with narrative complexity in single images or texts, in series of images or texts, and at the intersection of text and image.

The Yaxchilán lintels were made for one building, but their mode of reception applies to sculptures that were made at different times but set in physical association with one another. Each new sculptural dedication changed the meaning of others before it. Regardless of when each was made, sculptures in physical arrangements gave people opportunities to read or perform them in multiples and expand their narratives and chronology.

The two models, tableau and series, involve different modes of sculptural operation and viewing. In the tableau, monuments interact with each other through their living qualities and imputed capacity to see, breathe, and act. They also are activated through the mediation of people who place themselves amid sculptures

and participate in witnessing and dialogue. A series, on the other hand, is less about sculptures communicating with each other than about the expansion of narrative. As multiple sculptures are viewed and read together, they invoke larger cycles of time and history. But the models are not mutually exclusive, for sculptures could be activated as both tableaux and series, as I suggest for those in the Piedras Negras South Group Court.

In sum, the history carved on Maya sculptures was intertwined with the monuments' materiality, vitality, sacrality, ceremonial roles, and interaction with other monuments, the surroundings, and living people. As argued in chapter 2, circumambulation was an important type of engagement with individual sculptures. Movement was likewise crucial in the experience of multiple sculptures together. Whereas some connections across sculptures could be experienced through sight alone, others required people to move. As argued for single sculptures, moving among multiple monuments—including circumambulation around courts or processions up pyramids or between architectural groups—amounted to religious practice as well.

Sculptural Dialogues

Across the reigns of Piedras Negras Rulers 1 through 7, the usual practice was to leave sculptures on view where they were dedicated. As the older sculptures remained in place, they took on new meaning with juxtapositions that created, extended, and renewed relationships across time. This took place among monuments within reigns of individual rulers and across generations. This could happen with sculptures in close juxtaposition, across a court, or across the site. Newer sculptures gave currency to the older sculptures, provided new emphases, and shed light on the past, its actors, and its material remains. The continuing presence of older sculptures gave visual, material, and ideological precedent to newer ones. Shared references among them—including citations of motifs and formats—contributed to their historical discourse.

RULER 1, K'INICH YO'NAL AHK I (603–639 CE)

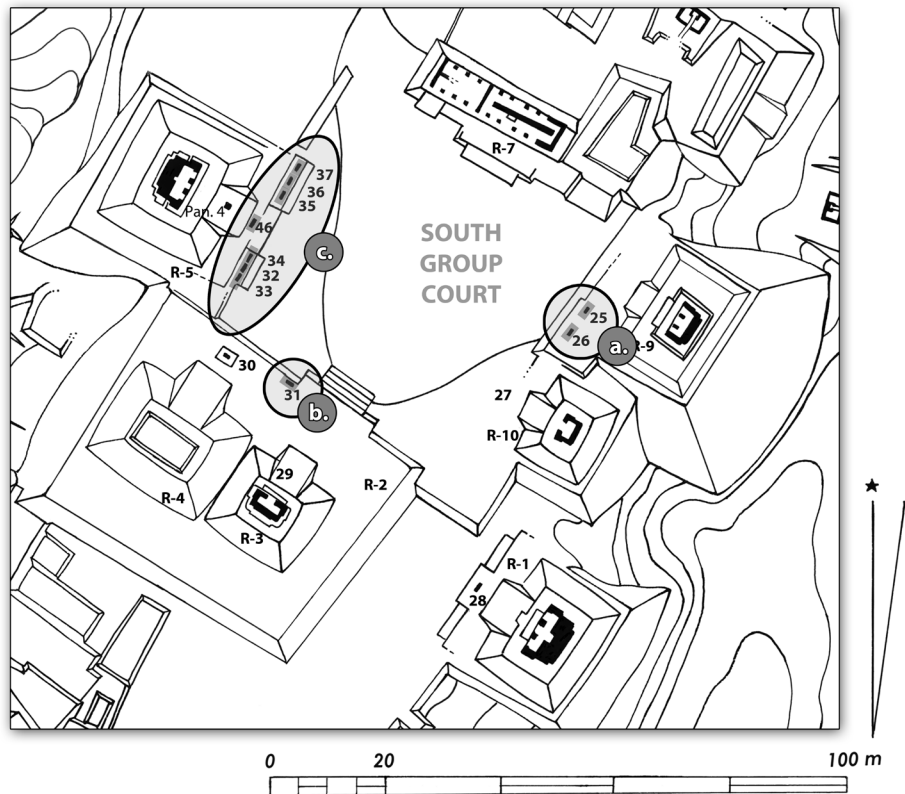
The monuments of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I (Ruler 1) set a template for much of the polity's subsequent sculptural production. Over the course of 150 years, his successors emulated and responded to his stelae and their themes, placement, dedication frequency, and serialization. In the early seventh century, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I erected Stelae 25, 26, and 31 in the South Group Court. Stelae 25 and 26 were in front of Structure R-9, a 9-meter-tall pyramid on a platform on the court's southeastern side, and Stela 31 was in front of Structures R-3 and R-4, terraced pyramids—9.4 meters and 11 meters tall, respectively—on a shared platform with a megalithic stairway on the court's southwestern edge (Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:18–19; [1944] 2005e:184) (figs. 3.9, 3.10, plate 8).¹

Stela 25, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's first stela, commemorates the 9.8.15.0.0 (4 June 608 CE) period ending (fig. 3.10). K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I is portrayed on the front, seated in a niche, and the text recounts his accession and the celebration of ceremonial acts—including bloodletting—in the company of deities. Stela 26, his first warrior monument, dated to 9.9.15.0.0 (20 February 628 CE) and erected southwest of Stela 25, portrays him as a standing warrior with an elaborate, feathered mosaic-serpent

headdress in Teotihuacan style (fig. 3.10). He holds a rectangular shield and a serpent staff; two bound captives—a Sak Tz'i lord and a Palenque courtier—kneel at his feet (Martin and Grube 2008:142–43). Paired in front of Structure R-9, Stelae 25 and 26 show K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I as ceremonial participant and victorious warrior.

Stela 31, another warrior monument, was dated possibly to 9.10.5.0.0 (29 December 637 CE) (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; see Maler 1901, plate XXV). The Stela 31 fragments together are 4.57 meters tall, and the monument may have measured five meters (Morley 1937–38, 3:64–65), nearly two meters taller than Stela 26—a dramatic increase in size. Stela 31 depicts K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I wearing a feathered mosaic-serpent headdress, holding a serpent staff, and lording over captives.

With Stela 26 on the court's southeastern side and Stela 31 on the southwestern side, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's warrior stelae were set in physical relation to each other and created a tangible presence of the king-as-warrior. The space of dialogue among his monuments was thus expanded, and an observer could see the two warrior monuments and Stela 25 from the center of the court. The three monuments formed a tableau, for they faced each other and any people in the court. They also formed a series, for they were dedicated on various period endings. The trio

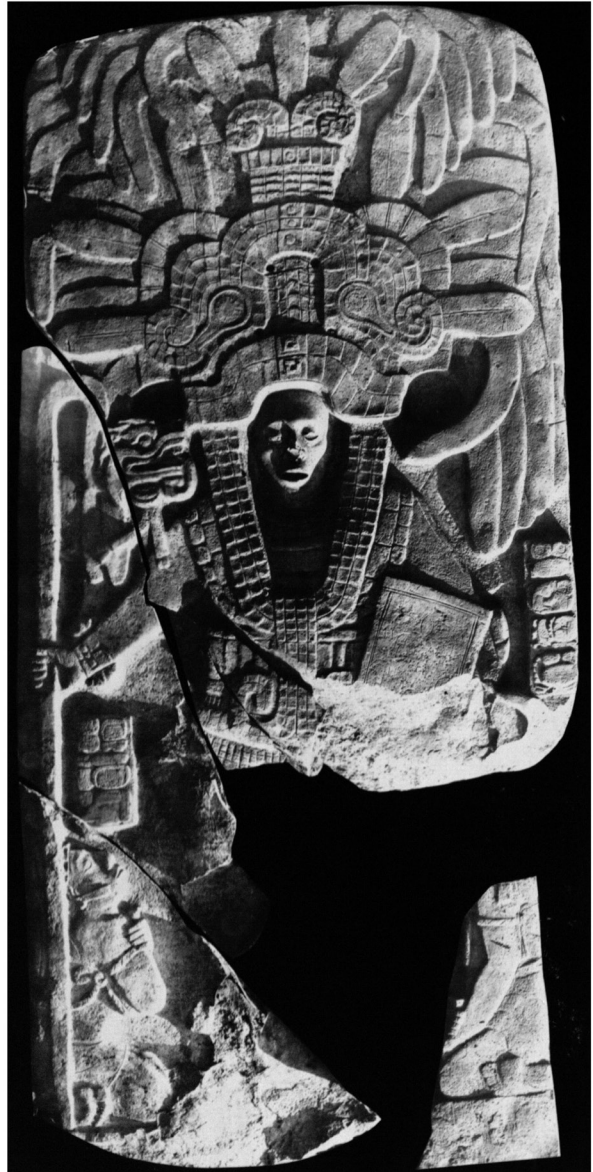


- a. Stelae 25 & 26: K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, Structure R-9
- b. Stela 31: K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, Structures R-3 & R-4
- c. Stelae 32–37: Itzam K'an Ahk I, Structure R-5

Figure 3.9. Location of Piedras Negras Stelae 25, 26, and 31, of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I (Ruler 1), and Stelae 32–37, of Itzam K'an Ahk I (Ruler 2). Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT.



a.



b.

Figure 3.10. Piedras Negras Stelae 25 and 26, monuments of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I (Ruler 1), Structure R-9. a. Stela 25, 608 CE. Photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #59-50-20/74011.1.2. Digital File #97470002. b. Stela 26, 628 CE. Photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #2004.29.7562. Digital File #98790013.

conveyed continuity in rulership and cyclical repetition and renewal—both in their content and material presence.

Stela 31's placement also demonstrates the importance of siting a stela in relation to earlier monuments, for Stela 31 stood in front of Structures R-3 and R-4, where the polity's earliest stelae—including Stela 30 from 9.5.0.0.0—also stood (Morley 1937–38, 3:35, 38). Notably, the Stela 31 text records a series of commemorations of period endings from 519 to 637 CE, including 9.4.5.0.0, 9.4.15.0.0 (reconstructed), and 9.5.0.0.0, and ends in the reign of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, with a possible dedication date of 9.10.5.0.0 (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008). Thus, Stela 31's hieroglyphic references to the past complement its physical engagement with the past, materialized in its association with earlier monuments. Such placement of monuments near older materials would become a salient pattern at Piedras Negras, for most of the site's later stelae were installed in front of the funerary building of the previous k'uhul ajaw (Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:105). The physical juxtaposition created a visual and material connection to that ancestor.

The dialogue between the material remains of the past and present would become even more pronounced with the sculptures of Itzam K'an Ahk I (K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's son) and beyond. A more distinct pattern of sculptural placement was then codified, for he—and later rulers, in turn—emulated the following patterns established by K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I:

- forms, sculptural types, scenes, compositions, and imagery
- dedicating a monument for every (or nearly every) hotun
- serialization and dedication of stelae of varying but consistent types, including the niche type, warrior type, etc.
- juxtaposing these types, such that over time, the k'uhul ajaw is displayed in multiple roles on multiple monuments
- placement, particularly in the erection of monuments in front of the funerary temple of each of their predecessors.

Later rulers followed most of these patterns. Yet the directionality or orientation of the monuments generally was not copied. Instead, subsequent rulers placed their monuments across from or facing in the direction of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's sculptures. These orientations appear to have functioned to pay reverence to the early monuments and engage them in dialogue.

RULER 2, ITZAM K'AN AHK I (639–686 CE)

Between 642 and 672, Itzam K'an Ahk I (Ruler 2) erected seven stelae in front of Structure R-5, including five with images of the k'uhul ajaw and other figures (Stelae 32–35 and 37), one all-glyphic stela (Stela 36), and one columnar stela (Stela 46), in addition to one panel (Panel 4) (fig. 3.9). The R-5 pyramid is located on the northwest edge of the South Group Court, directly across from Structure R-9 and his father's stelae (see plate 8).²

Itzam K'an Ahk I's monuments faced and responded to K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's stelae across the court. Stela 33, Itzam K'an Ahk I's inaugural stela, celebrated his accession

and first hotun ending in office. Like his father's niche monument (Stela 25), Stela 33 portrays Itzam K'an Ahk I on an elevated seat, and both Stelae 25 and 33 show the *k'uhul ajaw*—Yo'nal Ahk I and Itzam K'an Ahk I, respectively—celebrating their first hotun ending in office. However, Stela 33 portrays the younger ruler not frontally but in profile and interacting with his mother. Many of the same elements are found on Stelae 33 and 25, but they are shifted in space (fig. 3.11). Whereas Itzam K'an Ahk I's body is frontal, his head is turned to his right as he looks toward his mother, and his left arm is raised as an indication of this shift and a response to her presence. This change in representation undoubtedly resulted from the need to include his mother, who likely was the child's regent (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Martin and Grube 2008:143). She appears as both witness and active participant in the ceremony, and their interaction was favored over the image of a frontally facing king.

Stelae 25 and 33 stood across from each other, although they were offset and did not face each other directly. Nonetheless, their similar subject matter and placement connect the monuments and their embodied kings. Furthermore, the presence of Itzam K'an Ahk I's mother on the monument's ground line near a potential viewer would have established a relationship between the witnessing mother and a living viewer. The viewer would thereby become situated in the very space of dialogue between Stelae 33 and 25, and the living person's presence as a witness between them might activate their dialogue.

But it is with Itzam K'an Ahk I's next sculpture dedication that the dialogue between his stelae and his father's stelae across the court becomes pronounced, for Itzam K'an Ahk I's Stela 35 (9.11.10.0.0, or 20 August 662 CE) more directly engages with his father's Stela 26 (fig. 3.12). Both Stelae 35 and 26 bear images of warrior kings with a towering headdress, rectangular shield, vertical spear or staff, and one or two kneeling captives. The similarities convey an image of continuity, repetition, and renewal over time and across generations. Stela 35 is more or less aligned with Stela 26, creating a more direct connection between them. The two monuments face each other, with K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I remaining on view and upright, as if still alive, looking toward his son. The monuments stood about sixty meters apart and would have been intervisible, each in the *y-ichnal* of the other. This arrangement was comparable to scenes of witnessing in pictorial narratives.

The similarities and orientations of Stelae 26 and 35 draw people into their dialogue. Yet such lived experience depends on vision, movement, and memory. One has to turn 180 degrees or walk between them, and visual memory would have been crucial in retaining what one saw on each monument. Nonetheless, their similarities would have aided image retention and operated as cues to make links across the monuments.

Five of Itzam K'an Ahk I's monuments in front of Structure R-5 were figural (Stelae 32–35 and 37) and portrayed him over the course of his life in multiple roles, both ceremonial and bellicose (Clancy 2009:109). As a group, they present an image of continuity, cyclicity, and endurance in his reign, and their multiplicity may have generated movement across the line of stelae. Moreover, Itzam K'an Ahk I's sculptural series emulated that of his father, which would have further strengthened the parallels among their monuments.

The two sets of stelae formed a tableau, for the monuments face each other, and a person in between could participate in the tableau. But these stelae arrangements

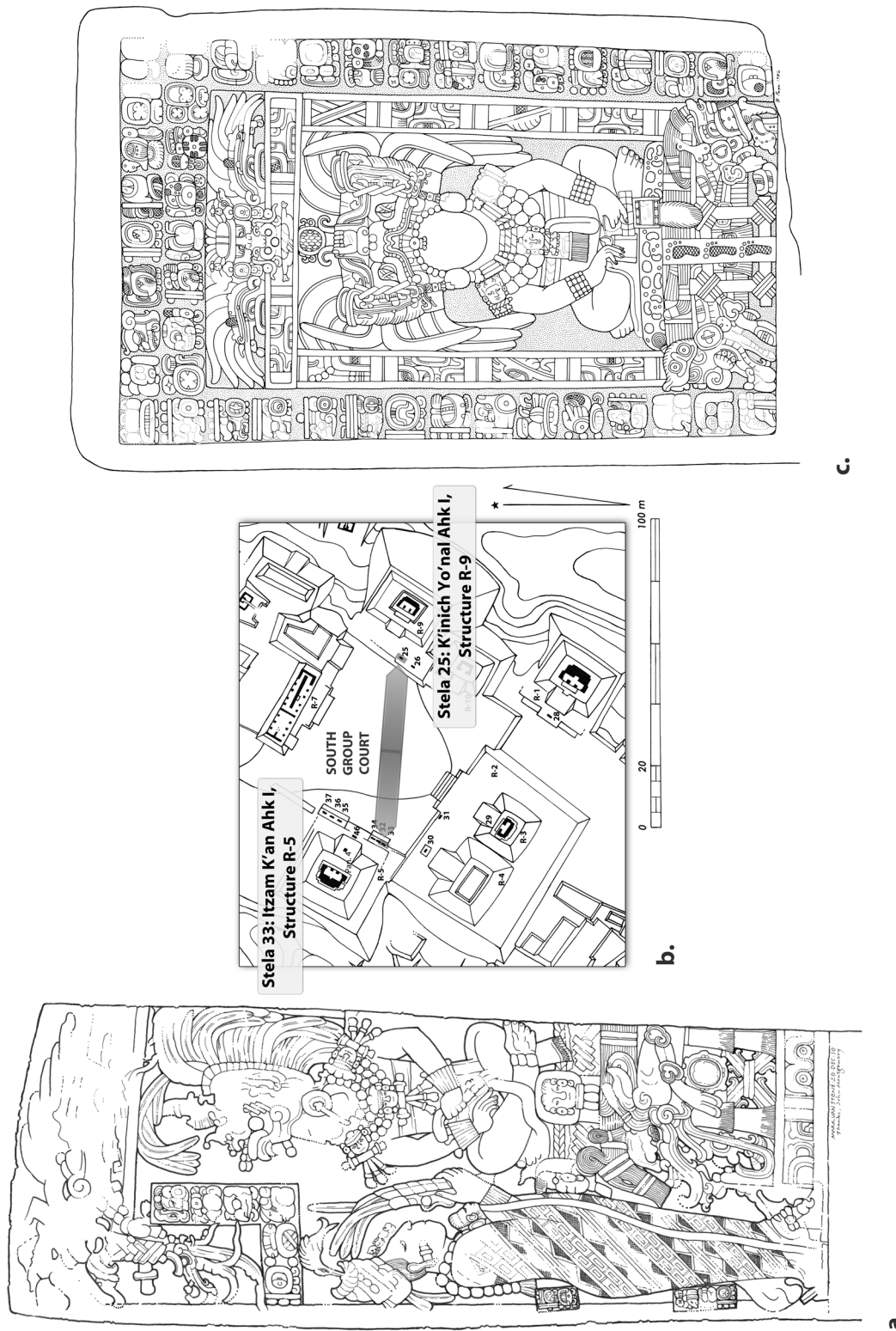


Figure 3.11. Piedras Negras Stelae 33 and 25, with locations. a. Stela 33, of Itzam K'an Ahk I (Ruler 2), 642 CE, from Structure R-5. Drawing by Mark Van Stone. Courtesy of Mark Van Stone. b. South Group. Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT. c. Stela 25, of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I (Ruler 1), 608 CE, from Structure R-9. Illustration by Barbara Page from *Maya History* by Tatiana Proskouriakoff, edited by Rosemary A. Joyce, Copyright © 1993. By permission of the University of Texas Press.

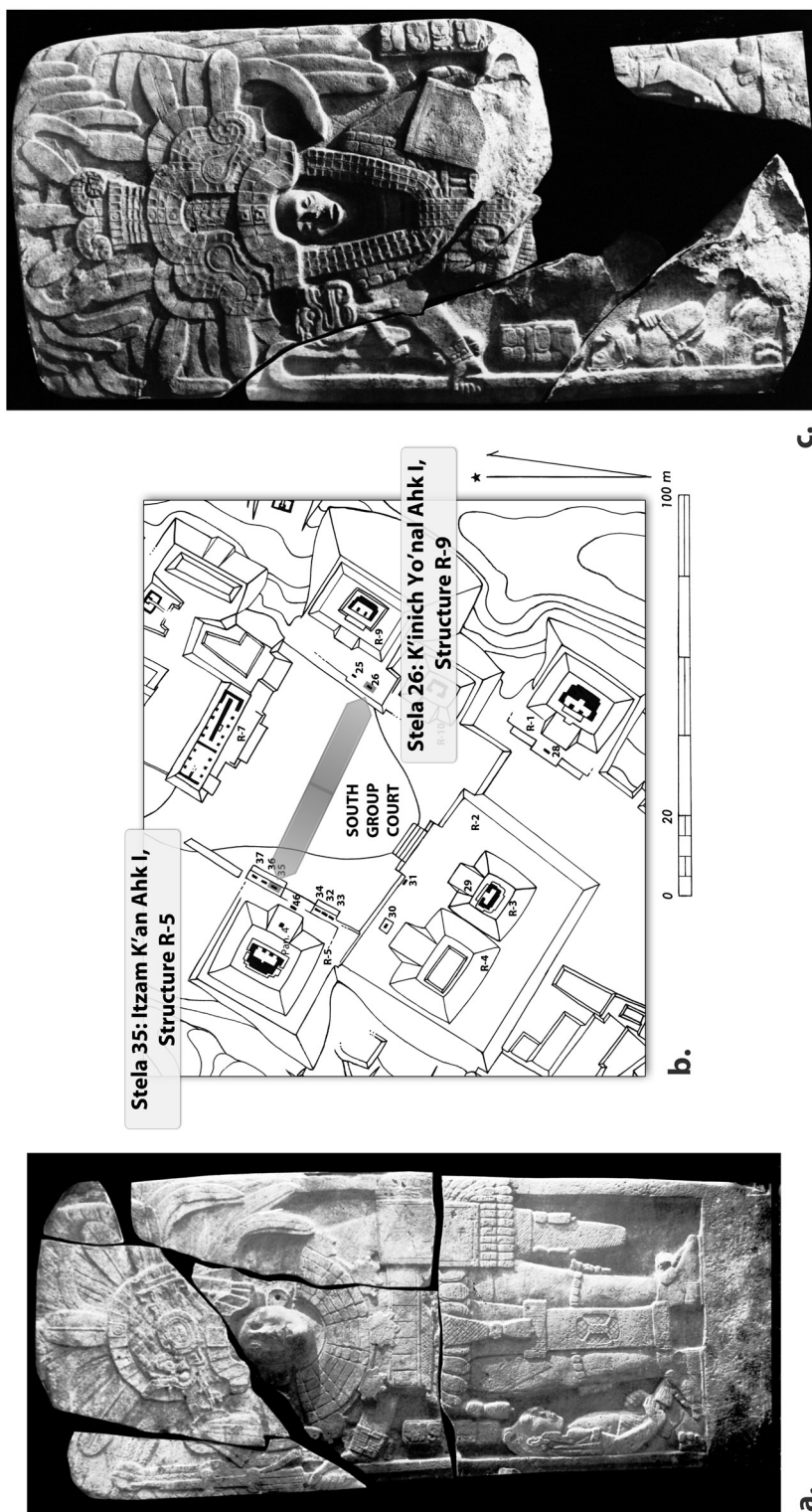


Figure 3.12. Piedras Negras Stelae 35 and 26, with locations. a. Stela 35, of Itzam K'an Ahk I (Ruler 2), 662 CE, Structure R-5. Photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #2004.24.2659. Digital File #130910008. b. South Group Court. Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT. c. Stela 26, of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I (Ruler 1), 628 CE, Structure R-9. Photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #2004.29.7562. Digital File #98790013.

also may have functioned as series in a manner similar to the Yaxchilán lintels described earlier, in which the installation of multiple monuments expanded their chronology and narratives.

The text and image on Itzam K'an Ahk I's Panel 4, on Structure R-5, produce historical discourse analogous to the interface of the two rulers' monuments (fig. 3.5). Panel 4's text, mainly retrospective, recounts the life and death of his father, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, who is posthumously portrayed in the image. The text ends approximately one k'atun after his father's death, with Itzam K'an Ahk I performing a fire ceremony in his father's funerary building, which may be Structure R-5 (Escobedo and Zamora 1999:217; 2001b:205; Houston, Escobedo, Terry, et al. 2000:10).³ By including events in the lives of father and son and narrating the fire ceremony the son performed for his father, the panel makes explicit cross-generational associations in the service of ancestor veneration and historical discourse.

These narrative links are parallel and complementary to the cross-generational connections produced by physical associations of sculptures, including the placement of Itzam K'an Ahk I's sculptures in front of his father's tomb, the continuing presence of Yo'nal Ahk I's stelae across from his funerary pyramid, and the positioning of father and son's stelae across from each other.

Needless to say, the reception of these monuments in multiples would not have been a sterile exercise of image or object comparison but instead likely occurred as part of religious performances, processions, and dances between and among monuments. The connections may have been performed through processions between the stelae clusters across the plaza on an east–west axis, analogous to the sun's path across the sky. Living people's experience of them further activated the space between them. For instance, ritual participants in a procession between them—perhaps during memorial rites on an anniversary of the father's birth, accession, or death—could have transformed the intervening space into a site for the performance of ancestral memory and historical discourse.

K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I and Itzam K'an Ahk I dedicated an array of stelae on the platforms of buildings surrounding the South Group Court. The stelae around the court's edge formed a rough semi-circle and could have been encountered by people moving in a circular progression, either counterclockwise or clockwise. A performer following K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's stelae through time, beginning with Stela 25 on the court's southeastern side and following the stelae in their dedication order, would move clockwise around the court's perimeter, eventually arriving at Itzam K'an Ahk I's stelae on the northwestern side, although those stelae are not arranged chronologically. Alternatively, if the chronology were followed backward in time, the movement would have been counterclockwise. The circular movement in the South Group Court is analogous to the circumambulation of individual stelae.

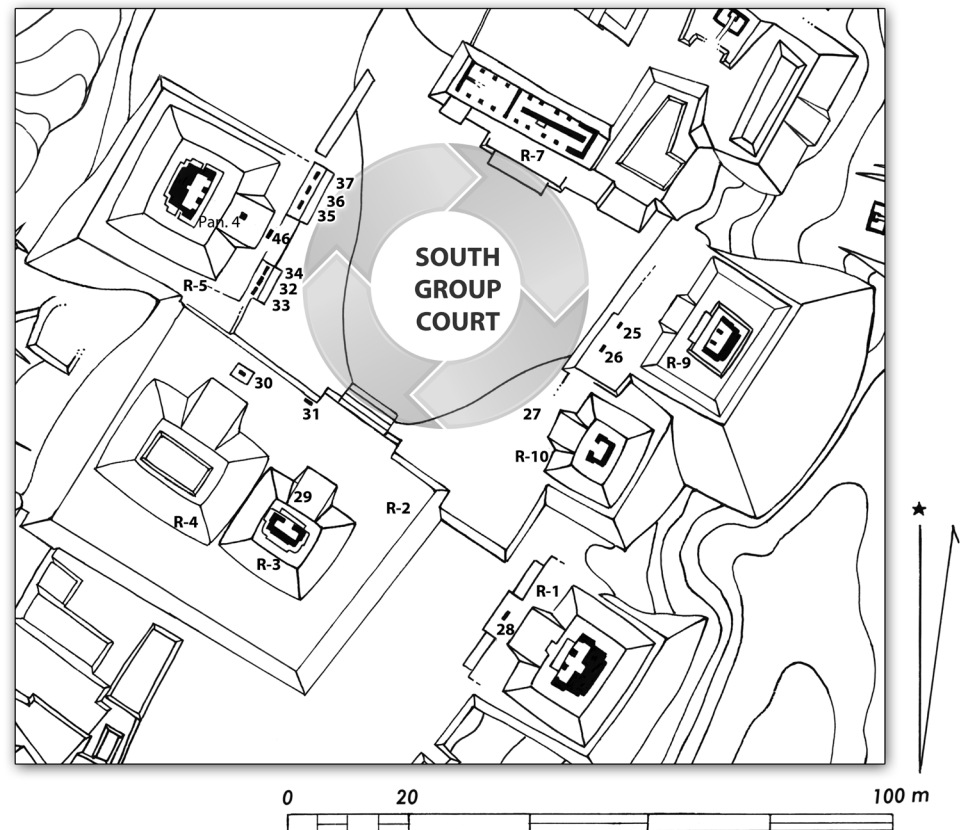
The only building in the South Group Court that did not have stelae in front was Structure R-7, a range structure on the court's northeastern edge (fig. 3.13).⁴ In this building, University of Pennsylvania archaeologists found what Satterthwaite (n.d., 9) called a “stone table throne,” located behind the central entrance of R-7. Its position was analogous to that of Throne 1 in the Acropolis, although the R-7 table was not carved and there was neither a back-screen nor a niche (Satterthwaite, n.d.). If this was a throne room, an enthroned ruler could look upon the court's stelae or performances of them. Furthermore, the monuments and the ruler would have been in

each other's y-ichnal, each witnessing the other. Alternatively, the throne may have been the last stop in a circuit that moved around the court and then ascended the stairs.

Circumambulation and a cross-plaza east–west processional axis could have articulated with other processional forms in the South Group Court, including vertical movement up and down pyramids such as Structure R-9 (fig. 3.14). There is evidence, in fact, for a ceremonial pathway up Structure R-9: four column altars are planted in floors in a line ascending its central axis, including one in the court in front of the building, one in front of the stairway on the basal platform, one in front of the second stairway on an upper terrace, and one in the floor at the back of the shrine.

There is evidence for ceremonial activity during these altars' dedications and use. Dedicatory caches were discovered under Column Altars 1, 2, and 3 (W. Coe 1959:96–97; Satterthwaite [1944] 2005e:189, 193, 195), and the altars later were used in burning

Figure 3.13. Piedras Negras South Group Court, with gray arrows marking one potential processional route. Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT.



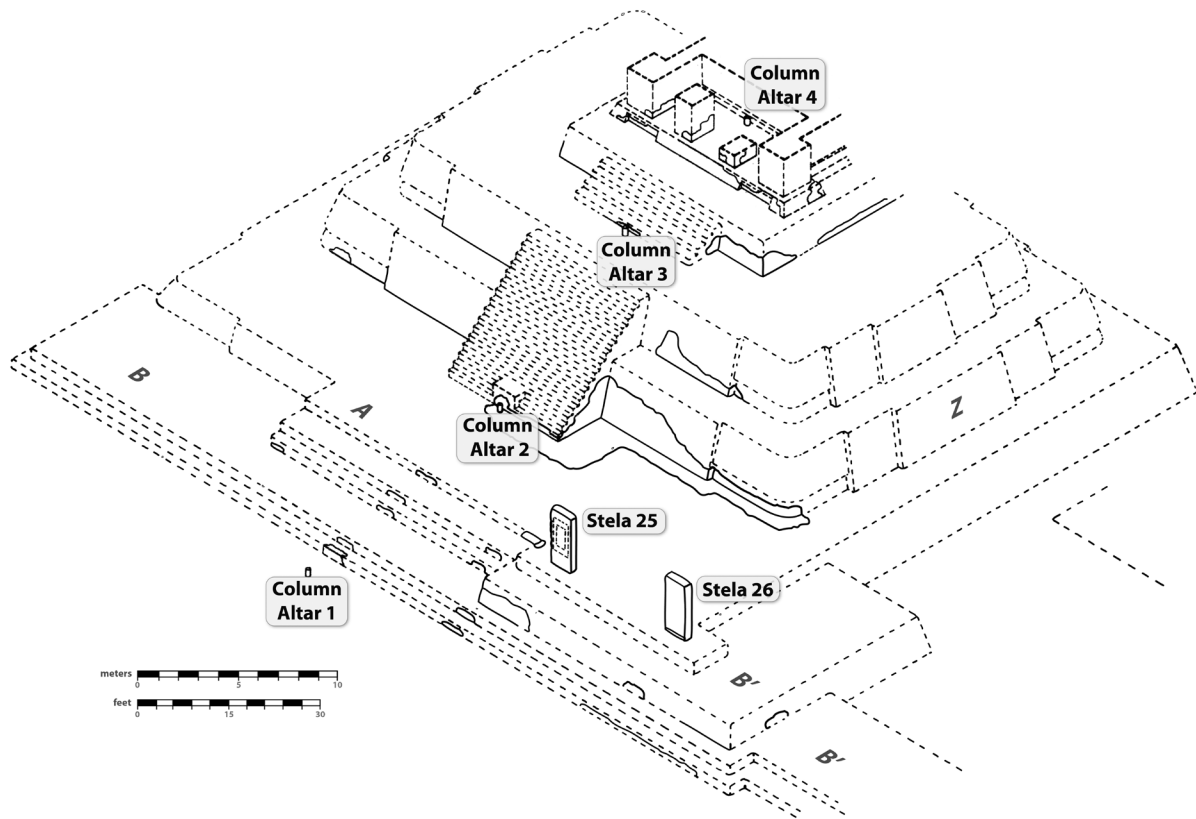


Figure 3.14. Piedras Negras Structure R-9. Architectural rendering by Linton Satterthwaite, with additions by author. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Image #194256.

ceremonies. Column Altar 4 showed evidence of burning, and Satterthwaite ([1944] 2005e:202) suggests the bad condition of the others above the level of the floor into which they were planted indicates they too were burned. These altars create a ceremonial pathway up the building, analogous to what Rosemary Joyce (1992) suggests for Structure O-13. In such a procession, ritual participants could have made offerings at each altar on the journey up the pyramid, and the altars' continued presence materialized and made permanent this ceremonial pathway.

Reese-Taylor (2002:143–45) has summarized some of the ethnohistoric and ethnographic evidence for diversity in Maya ceremonial processions and has characterized their forms as circumambulation, center–periphery, and mountain shrine processions. Examples of diversity in twentieth-century Maya processional forms come from Zinacantán and Chamula, among other places. Evon Vogt (1976:54; 1998:23–25) has described Zinacantán house dedication ceremonies that involve both counterclockwise processions around the house and processions to mountain shrines.

Gossen (1986:229–32, 246–47) mentions processions and performances of various shapes, including counterclockwise circling of the plaza and running across the plaza's east–west axis for the Chamula Festival of Games, a new year festival of world renewal. The counterclockwise and east–west movements imitated solar circuits and were fundamental for renewing the sun and the community. These performances were the culmination of a longer series of rites that also involved pilgrimages to mountain shrines outside the ceremonial center.

Reese-Taylor has interpreted architectural configurations at Cerros and Tikal as indications of the Classic period Maya performance of multiple types of processions. In addition, she notes that in modern Maya ceremonies, such movement “is punctuated by stops to perform ritual acts at stations, specific locales along the circuit.” Likewise, she imagines performers at Classic Maya sites stopping at buildings during processions for particular rites (Reese-Taylor 2002:145).

The comparable evidence at Piedras Negras suggests that performers in the South Group Court could have integrated multiple processional forms such as circumambulation, east–west movement across plazas, and ascent and descent of pyramids. Furthermore, processions involving multiple sculptures and buildings could have happened in tandem with engagement with individual sculptures; the more focused interactions with stelae and altars could have been performed as pauses or nested performances amid more expansive processions in courts and plazas and across the landscape.

The “Great Shift”: Transformation of Site, Sculptures, and Processions

Processions involving diverse forms and including stops at ceremonial circuits appear to have taken place in the South Group Court in the seventh century. Yet the experience and performance of sculptures subsequently changed. The visual dialogue between the stelae of Yo'nal Ahk I and Itzam K'an Ahk I is direct, for they face each other or are within each other's field of view. But this pattern of proximity between sculptures of different generations changed dramatically as rulers began to dedicate stelae in other parts of the site, the first being Itzam K'an Ahk I's Stelae 38 and 39 in the West Group, which widened the distribution of stelae across the landscape (fig. 3.15).

Itzam K'an Ahk I dedicated Stelae 39 and 38 at Structure K-5, a pyramid on the northeastern edge of the West Group Plaza. An earlier version of this building (K-5-3) may have come from K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's reign, for its ceramics date to the Balché phase (550–620 CE) (Houston, Escobedo, and Nelson 2008:50, 56–57). But Itzam K'an Ahk I constructed a new phase of the building and erected stelae there for his last two hotun endings—Stela 39 on 9.12.5.0.0 (2 June 677 CE) and Stela 38 on 9.12.10.0.0 (7 May 682 CE). They faced southwest, toward the South Group and the kingdom's earlier stelae. The erection of these stelae initiated a new ceremonial focal point, and the next two rulers would erect monuments nearby on terraces edging the Acropolis and overlooking the West Group Plaza. There were no more sculptural dedications in the South Group.

This change was part of a larger program of transformation of the site, particularly during K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's reign; Houston and Escobedo call it the “Great Shift” (Houston 2004:274–76; Houston and Escobedo 2001:613–14). Excavations by the

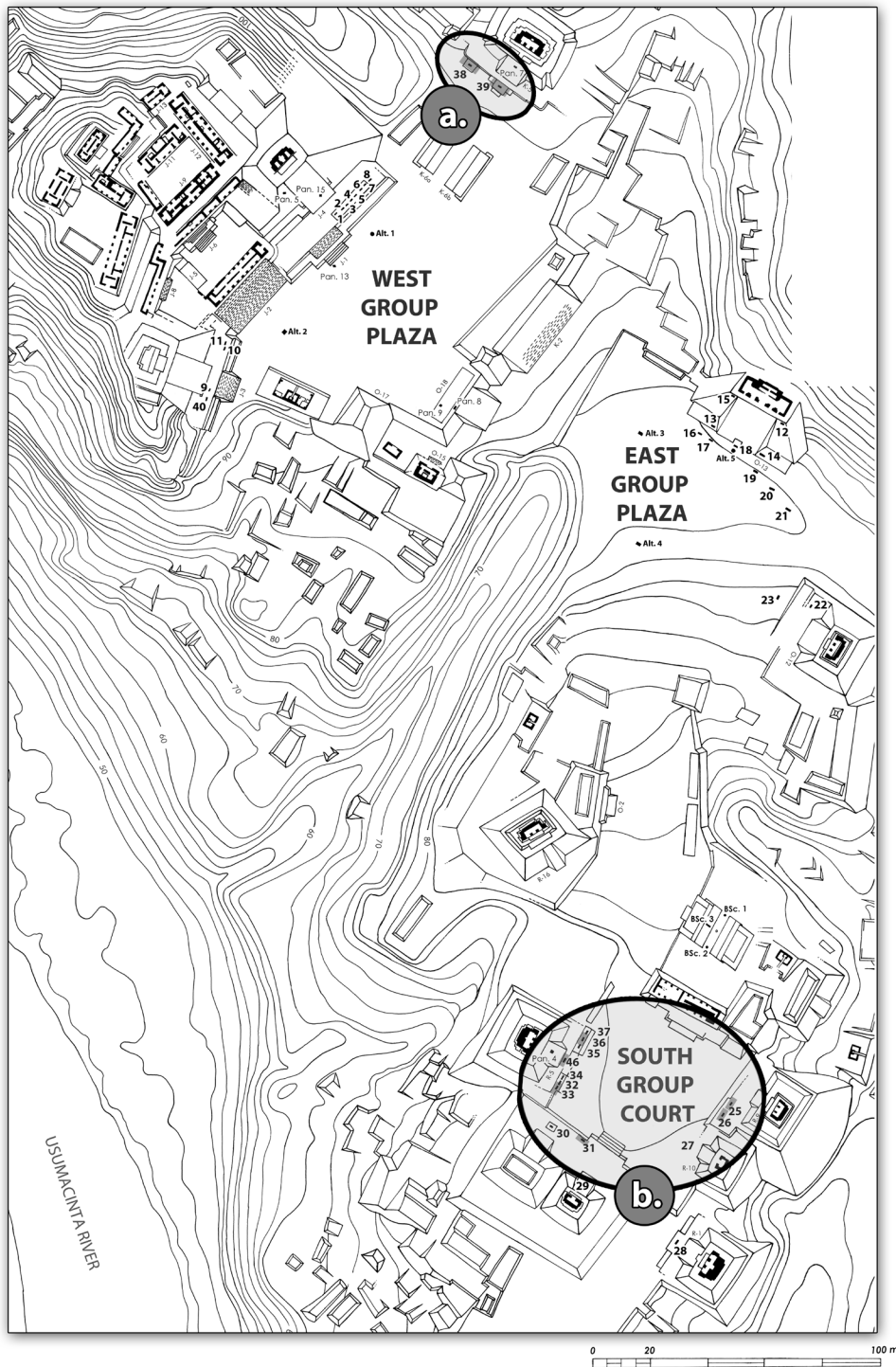


Figure 3.15. Location of Stelae 38 and 39 of Itzam K'an Ahk I (Ruler 2) in the West Group Plaza, in relation to stelae of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I and Itzam K'an Ahk I in the South Group Court. Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT.

- a.** Stelae 38 & 39: Itzam K'an Ahk I, Structure K-5
- b.** Stelae of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I & Itzam K'an Ahk I, South Group

BYU-del Valle project discovered Early Classic wattle-and-daub buildings that had been burned and buried beneath the West Group Plaza. Lilian Garrido and Houston and Escobedo hypothesize that these comprised an Early Classic palace that was burned during a mid-sixth century conflict with Pomoná. The older buildings were interred in massive amounts of construction fill, beneath what would become the new, larger West Group Plaza. The same authors conjecture that this happened at the end of Itzam K'an Ahk I's reign and during K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's reign (Garrido 1998, 1999; Houston and Escobedo 2001:613–16).

Thus began the transformation of the Acropolis into an exponentially larger, more complicated architectural complex with rising pyramids, range structures, and interior courts; over time, these structures would contain funerary monuments, the royal palace, and the throne room. Although begun in the late seventh century, the transformation of the Acropolis—and the site as a whole—continued over the next century (Escobedo and Houston 1998:413; 1999:428; Garrido 1998, 1999; Houston 2004:274–76; Houston et al. 1999:14, 2001:76–77; Houston, Escobedo, Terry, et al. 2000:10–11; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:100–103; Houston and Escobedo 2001:613–14). Houston, Escobedo, and their collaborators contend that the Great Shift's physical changes gave rise to social transformation, particularly due to the mobilization of labor and resources and the display of power (Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:100).

This massive reconfiguration of the site altered the way it was used and traversed. Barrientos (1997) has proposed that at this time processional causeways were created that connected the South Group to the newly elevated West and East Group Plazas; they were created both for processions and to enhance visibility among the architectural groups. In addition, Houston, Escobedo, and others assert the Maya constructed a sixty-meter-wide stairway as a grand entrance from the East Group Plaza to the West Group Plaza, doubled the size of the Acropolis stairway, and covered the Acropolis façade with large rectangular slabs of cut, dressed stones (Houston 2004:274; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:100; Houston, Escobedo, Terry, et al. 2000:10–11; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:25). This array of processional pathways, wide stairways, and the dressed Acropolis platform would have been visually impressive for processions and ceremonial displays. These new spaces and the physical connections among them would play a crucial role in the continuing enactment of dialogues among monuments and the personages they embodied, albeit at a vastly greater scale than those in the South Group.

RULER 3, K'INICH YO'NAL AHK II (687–729 CE)

K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II (Ruler 3), Itzam K'an Ahk I's son and successor, reigned from 687 to 729 CE (Martin and Grube 2008:145). Upon his accession, he took the name of his grandfather, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, thereby associating himself with him. But he also made links across the generations through the form and placement of his sculptures.

Building on the initiative of his father, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II further developed the West Group Plaza area as a ceremonial center, particularly with the dedication of eight stelae in front of Structure J-4, the probable location of his father's tomb (Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:103–105). Structure J-4, a terraced pyramid built

on a natural hill, reaches a height of twenty-eight meters—including the height of the 5.4-meter-tall J-1 platform—above the West Group Plaza (Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:25). This building was no doubt an impressive sight that was made even more spectacular by the stone slabs and megalithic stairway on the Acropolis façade.

As his father's stelae had done, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's stelae emulated those of his predecessors in the South Group. He dedicated his first monument—Stela 6—in 9.12.15.0.0 (11 April 687 CE) on the J-1 platform in front of Structure J-4 (fig. 3.16). Notably, Stela 6 closely followed the composition and imagery of Stela 25 (of 608 CE), his grandfather's inaugural monument, albeit with some additions and innovations, including more of a release of the body from the stone. His close modeling of his grandfather's stela perpetuates the relationship he established by taking his name.

One of his warrior monuments, Stela 7 (9.14.10.0.0, or 9 October 721 CE), was especially conservative and was similar to his grandfather's Stela 26 from 628 CE.⁵ On Stela 7, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II dons the mosaic war-serpent headdress that his grandfather had worn, and his face, too, is deeply set amid the large headdress (fig. 3.17). In addition, his vertical spear and rectangular shield are comparable to the vertical elements and rectangular shields on Stela 26 as well as on his father's Stela 35. Although not an exact copy of either, the similarities are striking. This monument constituted a return to tradition that connected his sculptural productions to those of his ancestors.

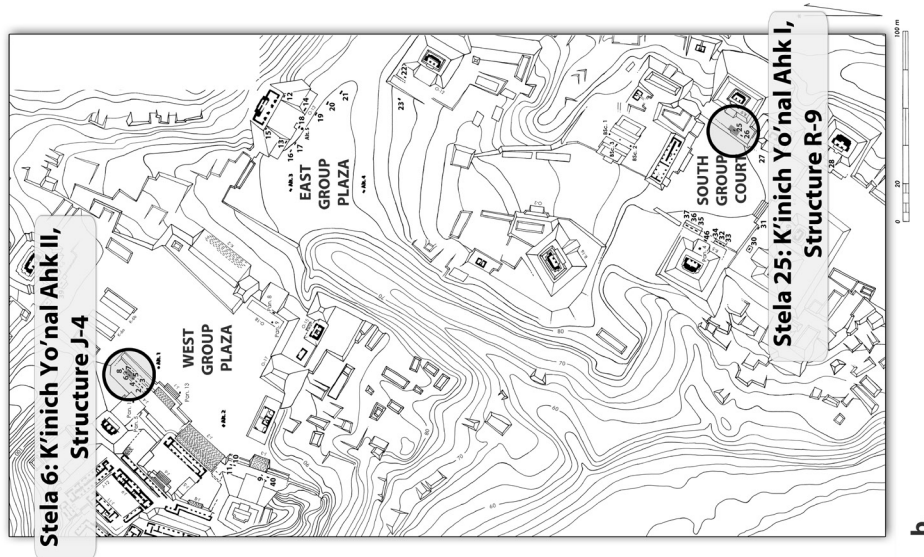
At the same time, there were differences amid the similarities. Depictions of rulers had individual characteristics, including their names in their headdresses and other distinctive costume elements. Innovations in the design of monuments occurred, including the types of scenes portrayed and their articulation with ambient space. K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Stela 5, for example, portrays a new kind of scene that positions him in a supernatural location. Other monuments were innovative in the inclusion of queens and subsidiary figures and the articulation of these figures in relation to ambient space, as discussed in chapter 2.

K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's stelae faced southeast and thereby looked toward the South Group and his ancestors' monuments and buildings. Nearly all subsequent stelae, in fact, faced either southwest or southeast and pointed in the direction of the South Group and the polity's ancestral roots. Yet there was no distinct alignment among them, for they did not directly face the earlier stelae. Instead, they faced the processional causeways connecting the architectural groups. This constituted an important shift in the relationship among stelae of different generations. It was no longer direct dialogue but more expansive processions that connected monuments. The movement of people across the site would have activated these links. These monuments' interrelations in effect worked as a series; their intersections could produce comparisons across generations and expand temporal narratives. The continued emulation of older stelae signaled the ongoing relevance and importance of the older monuments, which exerted power generations after their creation.

The texts on K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's stelae primarily concern the biographies of the ruler and his contemporaries. Structure J-4 also had a retrospective monument, Panel 15, that portrayed Itzam K'an Ahk I.⁶ The text spans eighty years, from 9.9.13.4.1 to 9.13.15.0.0, and is predominantly retrospective, narrating events in Itzam K'an Ahk I's life and ending with ceremonies performed by his son. One is a



a.



b.



c.

Figure 3.16. Piedras Negras Stelae 6 and 25, with locations. a. Stela 6, of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II (Ruler 3), 687 CE, Structure J-4. Photograph by author. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala. b. Locations of Stelae 6 and 25. Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT. c. Stela 25, of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I (Ruler 1), 608 CE, Structure R-9. Photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #59-50-20/74011.1.2. Digital File #97470002.

ceremony K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II performed at his father's tomb twenty years after his death.⁷ Because this panel was on Structure J-4, Itzam K'an Ahk I's tomb may be in or near J-4 (Fitzsimmons 2009:152; Houston and Escobedo 2001:620–21; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:103–105).

The association of this retrospective narrative with K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's current reign was another instance of making explicit, visible links between past and present. Moreover, Panel 15's cross-generational discourse verbally reproduces the discourse produced through the erection of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's stelae in front of his father's funerary pyramid and that produced through the viewing of multiple stelae from different generations in the Maya city.

Finally, like the earlier rulers' stelae, the J-4 monument assemblage forms a series showing K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II to be a multifaceted ruler—both victorious in war and pious in ceremony (fig. 3.18). The backs of the stelae also form a series, for K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's queen, Lady K'atun Ajaw, appears on the back of at least two stelae.⁸ The serialization of stelae emulated that of his predecessors and connected him in another way to them, for the repetition of serialization made their biographies part of a larger series of cyclical narratives, and the multiple sets of stelae conveyed continuity and repetition.

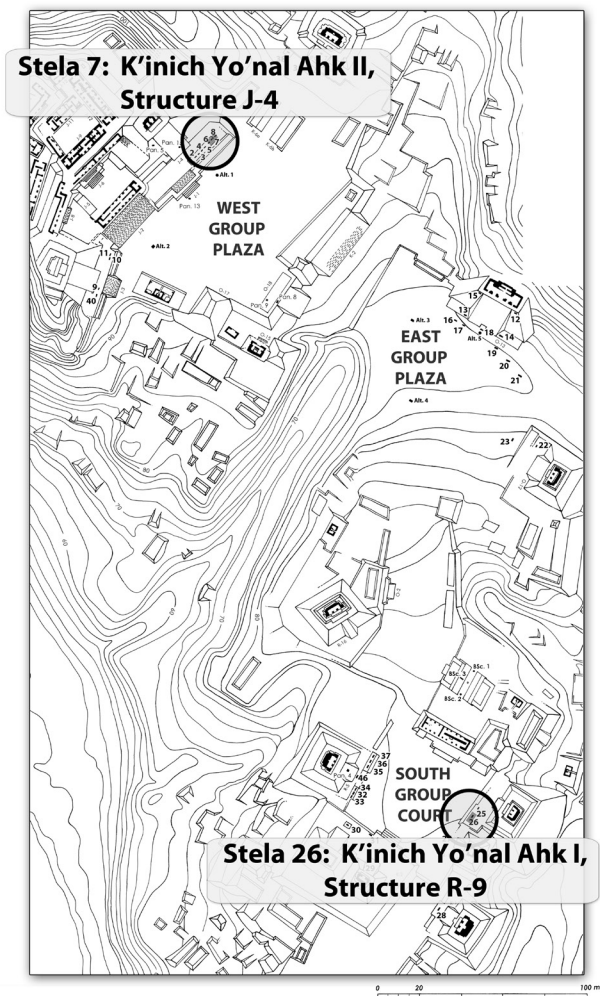
The significance of this serialization—both within K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's reign and in relation to his predecessors—was made explicit with the contemporaneous dedication of Altar 1 in the West Group Plaza (see figs. 1.8, 2.22). Altar 1, located between K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Structure J-4 stelae and the earlier rulers' stelae in the South Group, positioned these dynasts and their monuments in a larger temporal and spatial framework. The Altar 1 text is an idealized narration of the steady march of time, from almost six thousand years into the past to nearly 140 years into the future. It recounts a series of commemorations of period endings by various mythological and historical actors interspersed with unique events from rulers' biographies. The text, in fact, merges the commemoration of cycles of time and unique events in rulers' lives, and as hypothesized in chapter 2, its physical form would have guided circumambulatory processions related to cyclical renewal.

The altar's placement integrated stelae of different generations in a larger physical and spatial framework, and Altar 1 may have played important roles in processions across the site involving multiple monuments from different rulers. For example, a hypothetical procession moving from the East Group Plaza to the West Group Plaza would move up the K-2 stairway, and the first monument it would reach is Altar 1 (fig. 3.19). The altar's placement in the West Group Plaza near K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's stelae and on the processional axis from the East to West Group Plazas suggests that circumambulation of that altar could have articulated with such processions.

An early eighth-century procession, then, could have visited stelae from multiple reigns—each having been dedicated for a period ending—as it commemorated those various temporal cycles. A procession could begin with the South Group's stelae and follow the causeway northward to the East Group Plaza and then westward into the West Group Plaza, arriving at Altar 1. Movement around the altar, with a silent circumambulation or a recitation of its narrated period endings, would have complemented the visitations to the stelae dedicated in those cycles, with the performers touching—conceptually or literally—the material commemorations of those cycles and the rulers who marked them.



a.



b.

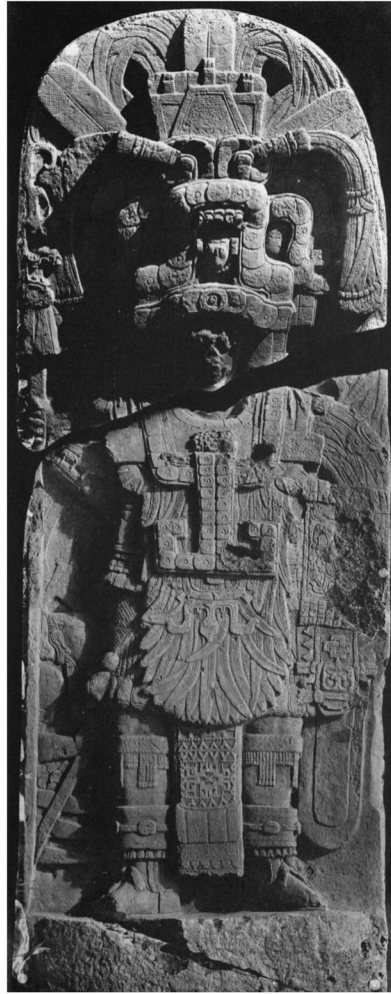


c.

Figure 3.17. Piedras Negras Stelae 7 and 26, with locations. a. Stela 7, of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II (Ruler 3), 721 CE, Structure J-4. Photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #59-50-20/74011.1.3. Digital File #98790014. b. Locations of Stelae 7 and 26. Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT. c. Stela 26, of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I (Ruler 1), 628 CE, Structure R-9. Photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #2004.29.7562. Digital File #98790013.



a.



b.



c.

Figure 3.18. Fronts of Piedras Negras Stelae 6, 7, and 8, three of the eight monuments of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II (Ruler 3), dated 687–721 CE, on the J-1 terrace in front of Structure J-4. a. Stela 6 photograph by author. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala. b. Stela 7 photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #59-50-20/74011.1.3. Digital File #98790014. c. Stela 8 photograph combines images from Teobert Maler (1901) and Ian Graham, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, p. 43, Stuart and Graham (2003), Peabody Museum Press.

tomb (fig. 3.20). The J-3 pyramid was another massive structure that rose twenty-eight meters above the plaza and had a stone superstructure (Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:25).

Although Itzam K'an Ahk II succeeded K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II, there is no evidence that he was biologically related to either K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II or Itzam K'an Ahk I (Martin and Grube 2008:148). Regardless, he created material and symbolic connections to his predecessors as if they were his ancestors. First, he was named after Itzam K'an Ahk I and was thereby connected with him. Second, he placed his monuments in front of a pyramid in the vicinity of his immediate predecessor's tomb. Third, his Stela 9 narrates a particular type of fire ceremony—*puluuy utz'itil*—that he performed for his predecessor (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008). Fourth, some of his monuments recall those of his predecessors. Stela 11, for instance, his inaugural niche stela (9.15.0.0.0, or 18 August 731 CE), emulated K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Stela 6, which in turn emulated K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's Stela 25 (figs. 3.21, 3.22). In addition, Itzam K'an Ahk II's Stela 9 (9.15.5.0.0, or 22 July 736 CE), a warrior monument, emulated Itzam K'an Ahk I's Stela 35.

Nevertheless, there was a change in how the stelae were installed, for Itzam K'an Ahk II's monuments do not face K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's stelae but continue their line, although the two sets are separated by the stairways and buildings of the Acropolis façade (figs. 3.20, 3.22). The stelae of Rulers 3 and 4 faced the West Group Plaza, and someone in the plaza would have been able to see parallels—even from a distance—between the sets of stelae. This semblance of continuity, therefore, could have been consumed with the eyes but still required movement of the body.

With K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's tomb and stelae nearby, Itzam K'an Ahk II's stelae coexisted with the material remains of the past. But the Acropolis was also the royal palace and held the living quarters and administrative rooms for the ruler, his family, and courtiers (Houston 2004). The Acropolis buildings, courts, and stairways were undoubtedly filled with mundane and ceremonial activity. These activities thus took place amid the monuments of the past, which were an enduring part of the present.

Processions during Itzam K'an Ahk II's reign could have ascended the stairways of temples such as Structure K-5 and the broad Acropolis stairway and circled the stelae mounted on the platforms at the eastern face of the Acropolis. Like the majority of the stelae of his immediate two predecessors, Itzam K'an Ahk II's stelae face southeast, in the direction of the South Group and its monuments. Yet any discourse among them required greater movement and visual memory on the part of people traversing the causeways between the South and West Groups.

As argued above, a significant aspect of Altar 1 was its role as a node or pause in processional routes from the South Group to the West Group. I hypothesize that it retained this role as the altar persisted through time and other altars were created, for their form, placement, and subsequent processions responded to Altar 1 and would have been part of the continual reshaping and performance of community memory. This is apparent, for example, in the installation of Altar 2 to the southwest of Altar 1 (figs. 2.22, 3.19). Its discourse structure also was based in temporal cycles, albeit only in Itzam K'an Ahk II's reign. Following Altar 1, Altar 2 would have offered another node for pausing and making offerings amid the longer processional route. At the end of the eighth century, K'inich Yat Ahk II's Altar 4, installed in the East Group Plaza, would have added another processional node along these routes.

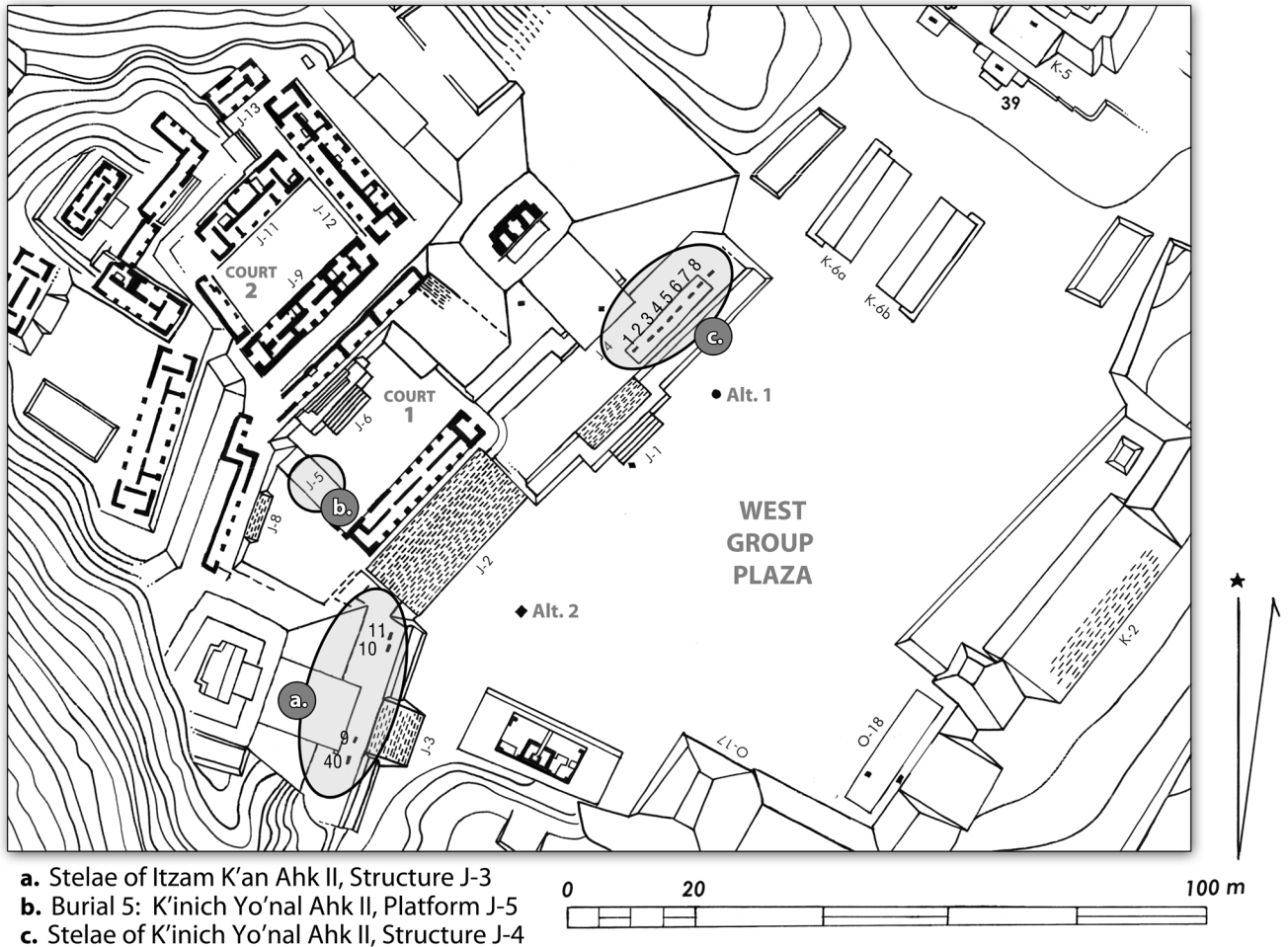


Figure 3.20. Plan of Piedras Negras Acropolis and West Group Plaza, showing locations of the stelae of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II (Ruler 3) and Itzam K'an Ahk II (Ruler 4) and the tomb of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II. Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by author and Kevin Cain, INSIGHT.

Itzam K'an Ahk II also expanded to another part of the site, for he dedicated Stela 22, dated 9.16.5.0.0 (8 April 756 CE), on the front terrace of Structure O-12 on the East Group Plaza's southeast side (fig. 3.23). Stela 22's dedication initiated the East Group Plaza as a new sculptural center; in this way, it was similar to Itzam K'an Ahk I's inauguration of the West Group with the erection of stelae on Structure K-5.

In contrast to every stela since 642 CE, Stela 22 faced northwest. Oriented toward the Acropolis stelae, it created a new axis of dialogue across the site. Still, this axis was along an already existing processional pathway that had been a principal path of movement from the South Group to the East Group Plaza and then to the West

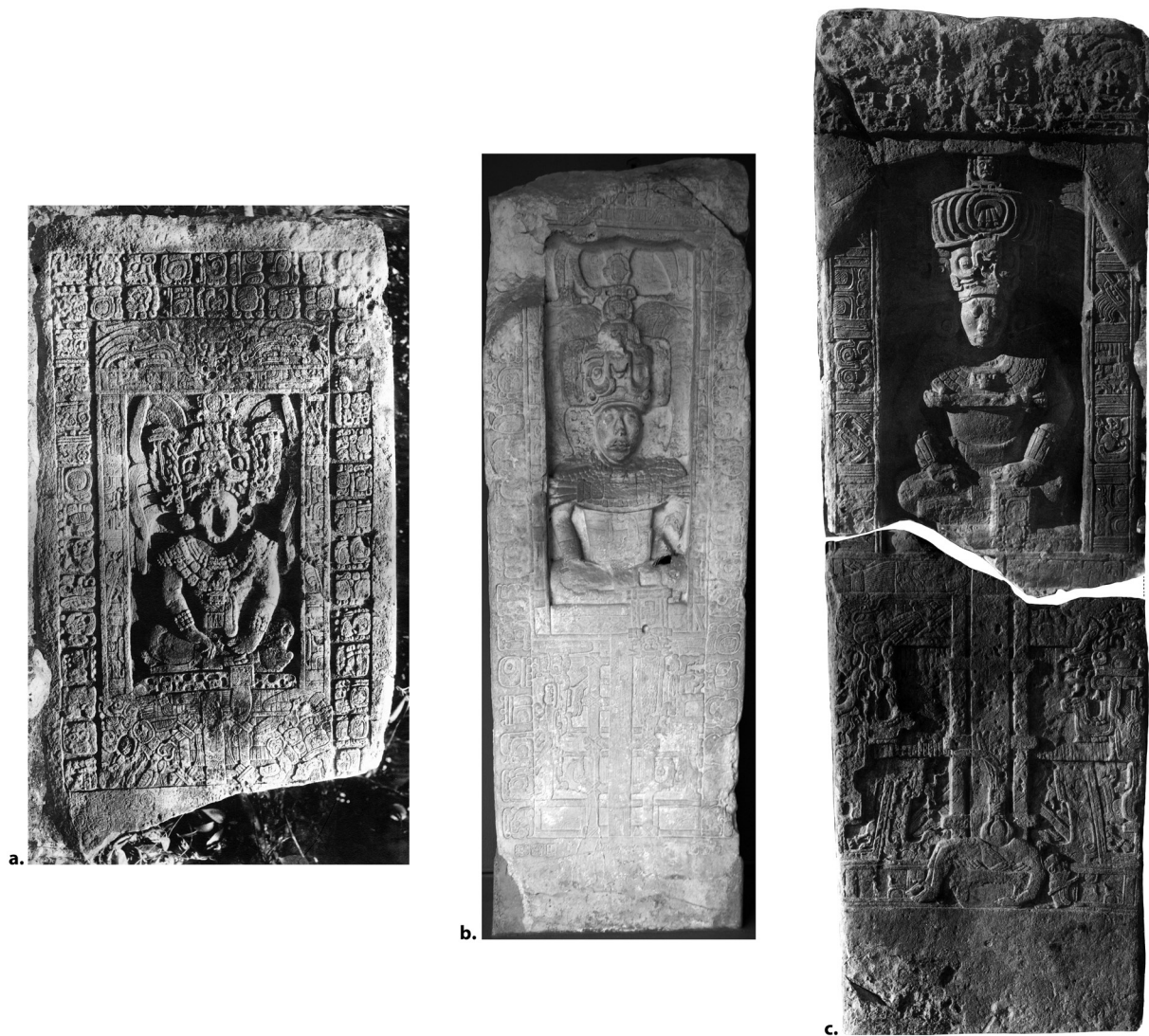
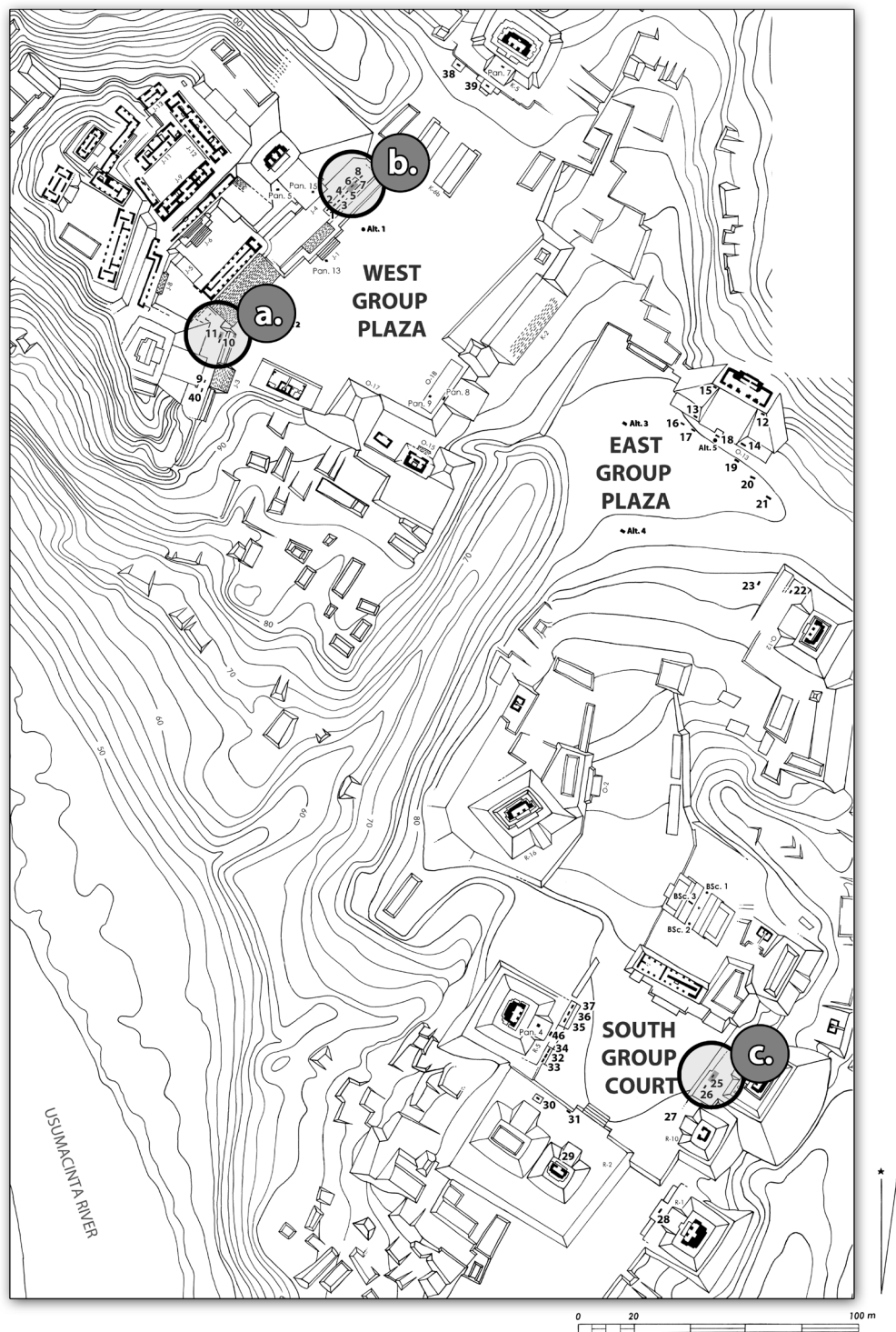
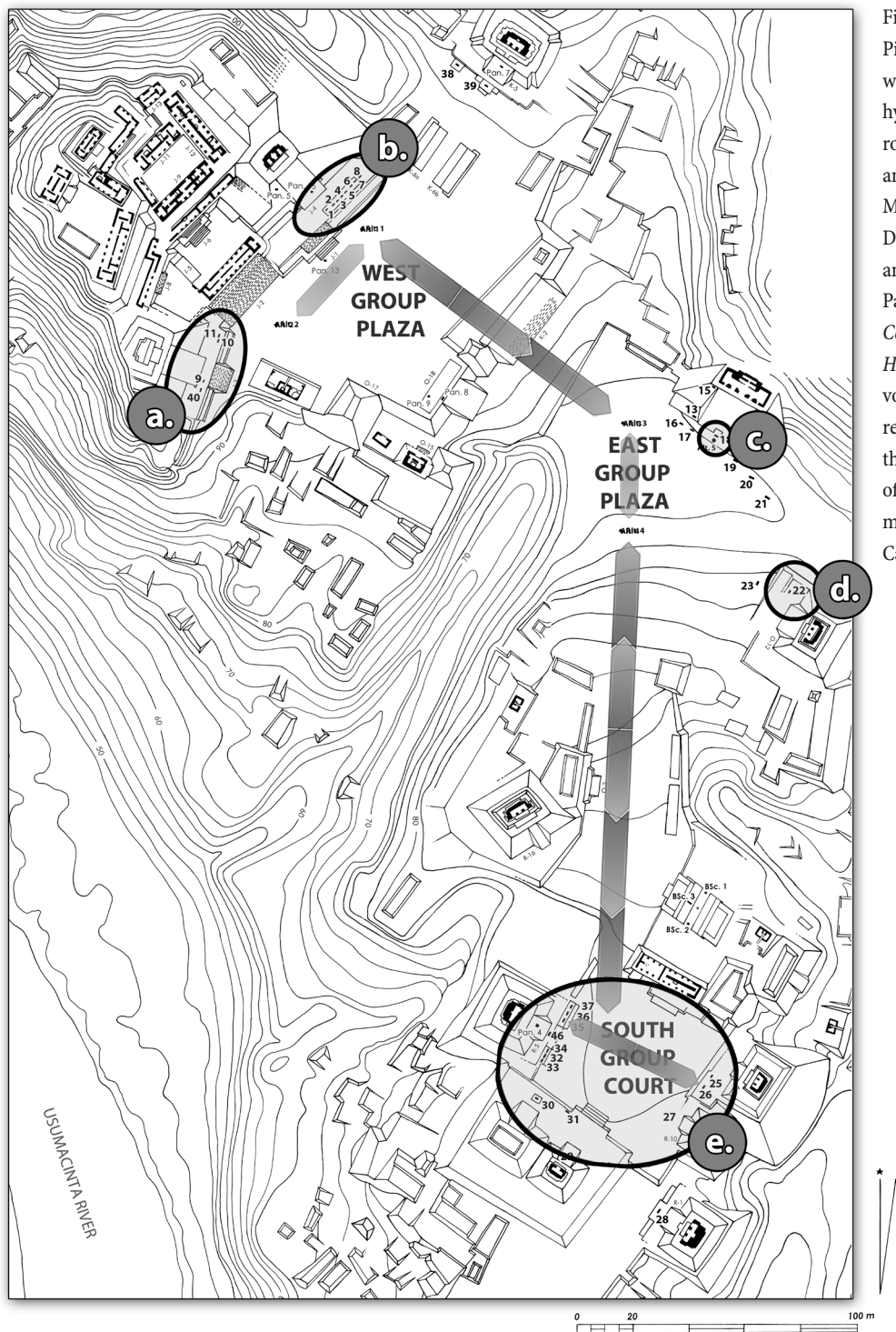


Figure 3.21. Piedras Negras Stelae 25, 6, and 11. a. Stela 25, of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I (Ruler 1), 608 CE, Structure R-9. Photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #59-50-20/74011.1.2. Digital File #97470002. b. Stela 6, of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II (Ruler 3), 687 CE, Structure J-4. Photograph by author. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala. c. Stela 11, of Itzam K'an Ahk II (Ruler 4), 731 CE, Structure J-3. Photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #59-50-20/74011.1.4. Digital File #98010008.

Figure 3.22. Location of Piedras Negras niche stelae, Stelae 25, 6, and 11, dated 608, 687, and 731 CE. Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by author and Kevin Cain, INSIGHT.



- a.** Stela 11: Itzam K'an Ahk II, Structure J-3
- b.** Stela 6: K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II, Structure J-4
- c.** Stela 25: K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, Structure R-9



- a.** Stelae of Itzam K'an Ahk II, Structure J-3
- b.** Stelae of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II, Structure J-4
- c.** Burial 13: Itzam K'an Ahk II, Structure O-13
- d.** Stela 22: Itzam K'an Ahk II, Structure O-12
- e.** Stelae of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I & Itzam K'an Ahk I, South Group

Figure 3.23. Plan of Piedras Negras site center with arrows demarcating hypothetical processional routes across the West, East, and South Groups. Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT.

Group Plaza and the Acropolis. In fact, the East Group Plaza must have played a significant role in these processions, for it was the connector between the South and West Groups. Although there may have been no sculptures in the East Group before Stela 22, both Structures O-12 and O-13 had earlier phases (W. Coe 1959:79–80; Escobedo and Zamora 2001d:449).⁹ Moreover, the location of the East Group Plaza at the nexus of causeways may have played a major role in the later choice to bury Itzam K'an Ahk II in front of Structure O-13 and to develop this building as a place for memory and ancestor commemoration, as discussed in chapter 4.

Monuments of Rulers 5, 6, and 7 on Structure O-13

Across multiple generations, Rulers 1 to 4 each used a new building for the installation of their stelae, and they appear to have chosen these buildings because they were the funerary pyramids of their immediate predecessors (Houston et al. 1999:13; Houston, Escobedo, Forsyth, et al. 1998:18–19). Yo'nal Ahk III (Ruler 5) followed the same pattern and erected his monuments on Structure O-13, a pyramid growing out of a hill and facing southwest over the East Group Plaza (figs. 2.16, 3.23). Barrientos, Escobedo, Houston, and others hypothesize that Structure O-13 was Itzam K'an Ahk II's funerary pyramid and that Burial 13, found at the base of Structure O-13, was his tomb (Barrientos, Escobedo, and Houston 1997:8; Escobedo 2004; Houston et al. 1999; Houston, Escobedo, Forsyth, et al. 1998:18–19; see also Wright 1997:214).

Itzam K'an Ahk II's burial at Structure O-13 would have sacralized it as an especially important location. By locating his monuments on the building, Yo'nal Ahk III displayed a concrete association with his predecessor. Ha' K'in Xook (Ruler 6) and K'inich Yat Ahk II (Ruler 7) also would choose Structure O-13 for their stelae. This practice strays from the previous pattern of erecting only one ruler's stelae in front of a pyramid, but these rulers were continuing in the spirit of the tradition, for the three, all born during Itzam K'an Ahk II's reign, may have been his sons. By installing their monuments on their father's funerary hill, they established physical connections with him (Houston 2004:275; Houston et al. 2001:70; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:106–107; Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Martin and Grube 2008:150–51).

By the time of the polity's fall in the early ninth century, more than fourteen sculptures from three successive rulers had been installed on and in front of Structure O-13. These are Stelae 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21; Panels 1, 2, and 3; and Altar 5 (fig. 3.24). Stelae 12 and 15 were on the pyramid's upper terrace; Stelae 13 and 14 on the lowest terrace (or in the plaza); Stelae 16, 17, 18, and 19 in front of the building; and Stelae 20 and 21 farther into the plaza to the southwest, less directly associated with the building. Panels 1, 2, and 3 may have been located in or on the superstructure or on masonry altars on the stairway, and Altar 5 was a plain circular table in front of the O-13 stairs and on the pyramid's central axis (Morley 1937–38, 3:221–81; vol. 5, plate 204b). The arrangement of these three rulers' monuments on Structure O-13 created opportunities for cross-generational discourse. Furthermore, some of the stelae closely emulated earlier stelae, and the building and its sculptures faced south, toward the South Group and the earliest rulers' monuments.

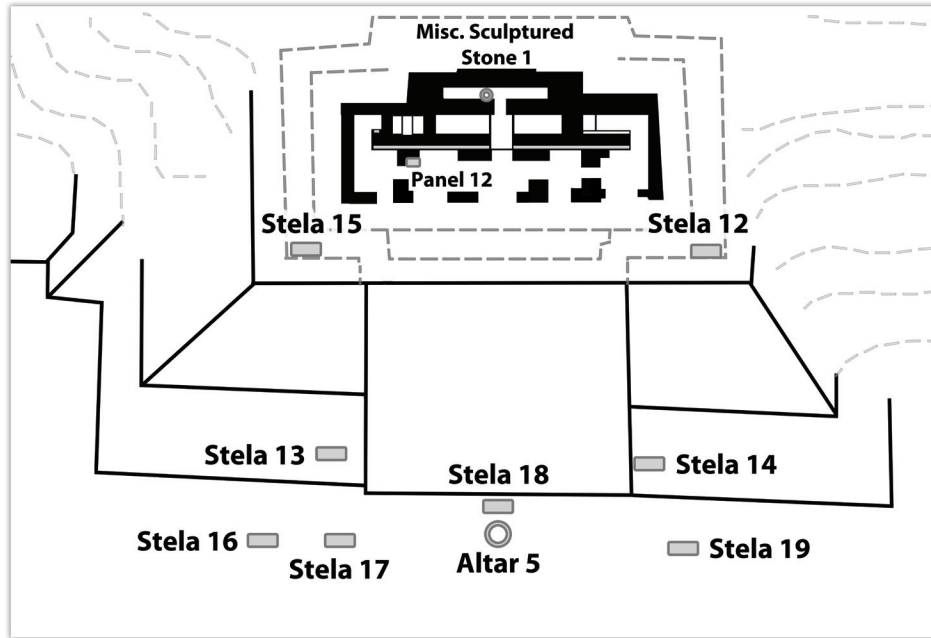


Figure 3.24. Plan of Piedras Negras Structure O-13, with monument locations marked. Drawn by author and Kevin Cain, after Sylvanus G. Morley (1937–38, vol. 5, plate 204) and David Stuart and Ian Graham (2003, map). Courtesy of Kevin Cain, INSIGHT.

RULER 5, YO'NAL AHK III (758–767 CE)

The paternity of Yo'nal Ahk III (Ruler 5) is not stated in any extant text; he may or may not have been related to his predecessor, Itzam K'an Ahk II, though he connected himself to his immediate and past predecessors in several ways. First, by taking their name as his regnal name, he associated himself with Yo'nal Ahk I and II (Martin and Grube 2008:151). Second, he placed monuments in front of Structure O-13, his immediate predecessor's funerary pyramid. Third, his inaugural niche stela, Stela 14, closely emulates his predecessors' inaugural stelae.¹⁰

Stela 14 is dated possibly to 9.16.10.0.0, or 13 March 761 CE, the first hotun ending of Yo'nal Ahk III's reign (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008:97) (plate 3). With the frontally facing Yo'nal Ahk III enthroned in a niche, Stela 14 closely follows the form and composition of Stelae 25, 6, and 11, his predecessors' niche stelae, from 608, 687, and 731 CE, respectively. Stela 14 imitates Itzam K'an Ahk II's Stela 11 in content, overall design, and the proportions of the design, with meticulous duplication of details, albeit with some modifications (fig. 3.25). Stela 11, in turn, had emulated Stelae 25 and 6. In addition, Stela 14's depth of relief is comparable to that of Stela 11, serving to release the ruler's body from the stone and convey depth and placement in space, with elements in front—such as the sacrificed victims—protruding slightly from the rest of the carving. In fact, Stela 14 is almost a recreation of Itzam K'an Ahk II's Stela 11, except for the addition of Yo'nal Ahk III's mother standing in front of the scaffold.

Stela 14 faces southwest, toward the dynasty's early roots, and its emulation of earlier rulers' stelae links it with those earlier stelae and the ancestors they embodied

(fig. 3.26). Indeed, the continued visual references to the site's earlier stelae indicates that those older sculptures were used and viewed into the eighth century and were still considered relevant, generations after they were made.

RULER 6, HA' K'IN XOOK (767–781 CE)

Ha' K'in Xook (Ruler 6) erected his stelae on Structure O-13 near his immediate predecessor's stelae and his father's burial. His Stela 13, placed on one of Structure O-13's lower terraces or in the plaza just below, was only 2.39 meters tall (Morley 1937–38, 3:16, 237–39). On its front is an image of Ha' K'in Xook scattering incense or blood for the 9.17.0.0.0 (20 January 771 CE) period ending, the first hotun ending of his reign. He is posed holding a ceremonial bag bearing an ajaw period-ending date. Both text and image retain aspects of the niche stela, but the form is quite different. However, it captures the essence of the period-ending celebration. The scattering scene portrayed on Stela 13 is analogous to those of Stelae 32 and 2; these may record a different part of the period-ending rites.

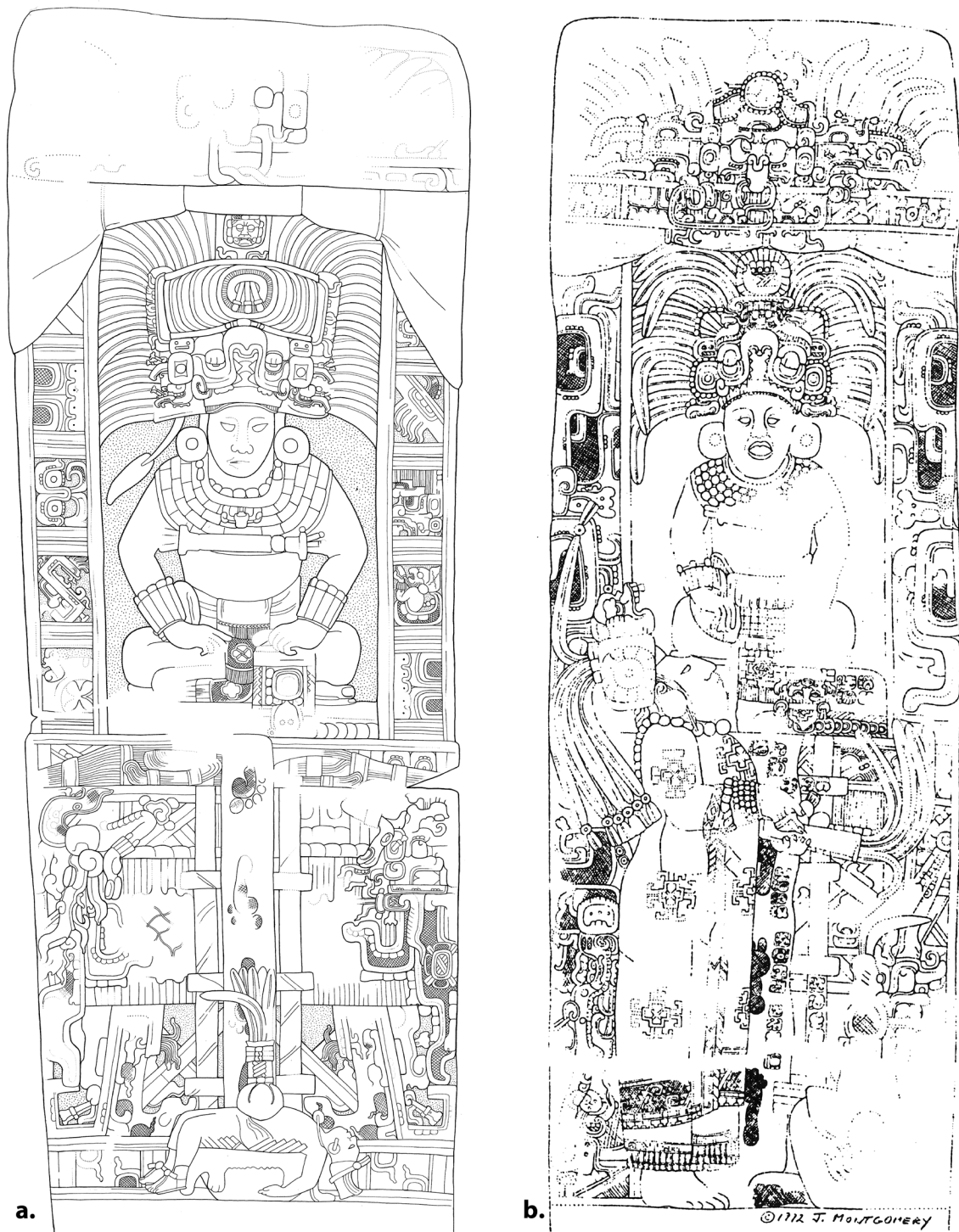
Ha' K'in Xook also dedicated Stela 23—now heavily damaged—near or on Structure O-12. In the surviving text, Ha' K'in Xook names himself as Itzam K'an Ahk II's child and recounts a puluuy utz'itil ceremony for his deceased father (Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:106–107). Through this memorial burning rite, Ha' K'in Xook shows an association with Itzam K'an Ahk II. He further connects himself to Itzam K'an Ahk II by erecting this monument near Structure O-12, where Itzam K'an Ahk II had erected Stela 22.

Ha' K'in Xook ruled only thirteen years and left the throne before what would have been the third period ending of his rule. His successor's Throne 1 narrates Ha' K'in Xook's loss of rulership on 9.17.9.5.11 (24 March 780 CE); it is debated whether this means he died or was forced to abdicate. The 9.17.10.0.0 period ending may have gone un-commemorated, for Yat Ahk II acceded on 9.17.10.9.4, more than a year after Ha' K'in Xook left the throne (Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:107; Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Stuart 2004a:1). There are no records of any one ruling in between (Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:107).

RULER 7, K'INICH YAT AHK II (781–808? CE)

The commemoration of time's passage resumed with Stela 15 and the celebration of the 9.17.15.0.0 period ending (2 November 785 CE) by K'inich Yat Ahk II (plate 9). Stela 15 is innovative, for it is almost a three-dimensional sculpture of K'inich Yat Ahk II. But it is also similar to Ha' K'in Xook's Stela 13, for both portray a ruler holding a bag with an ajaw period-ending date, and both were dedicated for the ruler's first hotun ending while in power, the same occasion as their predecessors' niche stelae. Through the similarity of its content, Stela 15 makes a visual reference to Stela 13. Its installation on the upper terrace on the northwest side of Structure O-13, above Stela 13, created a physical association as well (fig. 3.24). Both could have been visible at once to someone standing in front of the building, looking up to it, with the sight line activating the space between them in a path traveling up the pyramid. For some, this association might have entailed physical movement during a procession up that stairway.

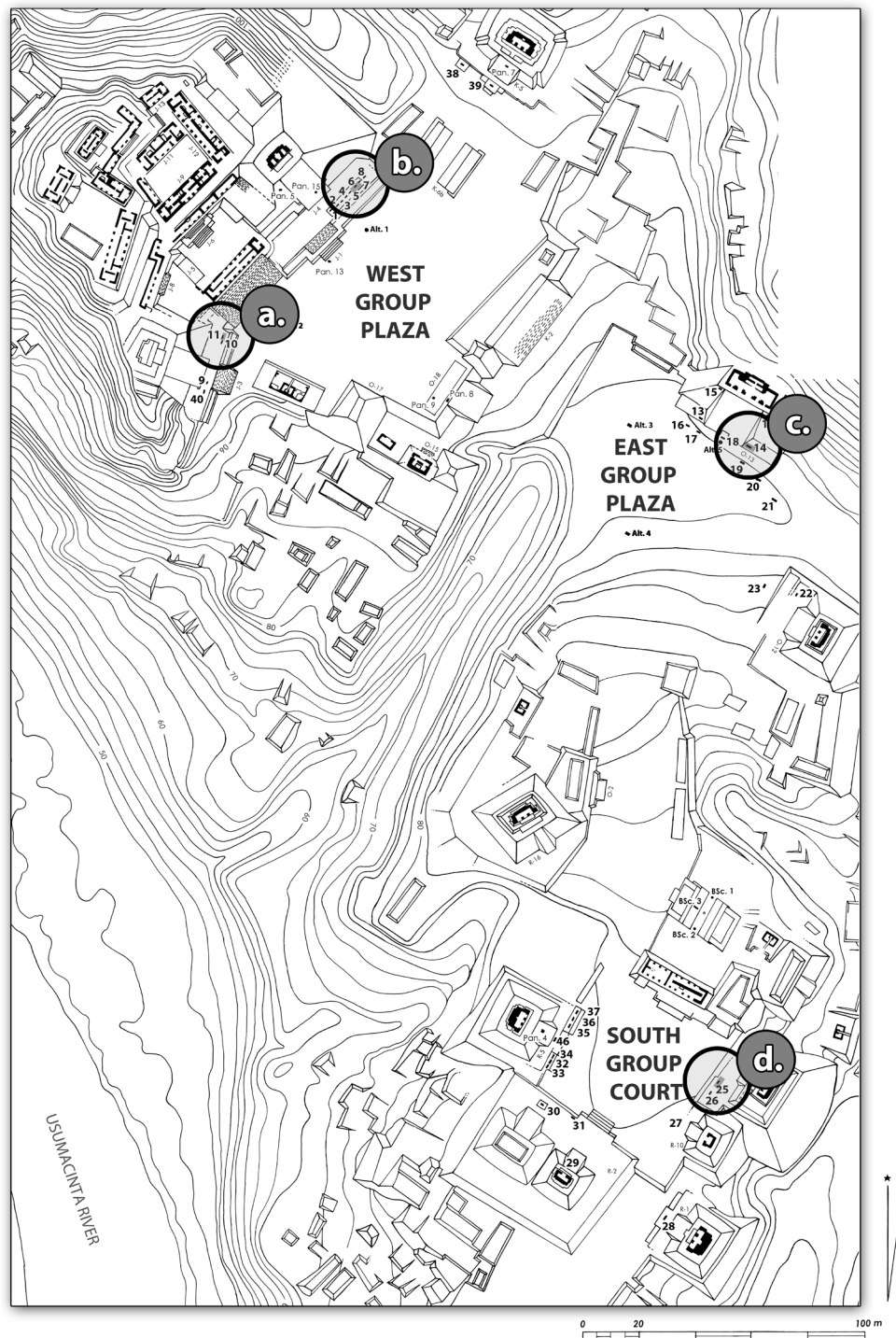
The last stela K'inich Yat Ahk II dedicated was Stela 12, which was planted on the eastern side of O-13's upper terrace (Morley 1937–38, 3:262). Dedicated on



See: **Piedras Negras: Drawings: Stela 14 (ST)**

Figure 3.25. Piedras Negras Stelae 11 and 14. a. Stela 11, of Itzam K'an Ahk II (Ruler 4), 731 CE, Structure J-3. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. b. Stela 14, of Yo'nal Ahk III (Ruler 5), ca. 761 CE, Structure O-13. Drawing by John Montgomery © Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org. (Images not to scale. Height of Stela 11 carving: 3.04 m; height of Stela 14 carving: 2.5 m.)

Figure 3.26. Location of Piedras Negras Stelae 11, 6, 14, and 25. Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by author and Kevin Cain, INSIGHT.



- a.** Stela 11: Itzam K'an Ahk II, Structure J-3
- b.** Stela 6: K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II, Structure J-4
- c.** Stela 14: K'inich Yo'nal Ahk III, Structure O-13
- d.** Stela 25: K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, Structure R-9

9.18.5.0.0 (11 September 795 CE), Stela 12 commemorates not only a hotun ending but also a victory over the polity at Pomoná. As discussed in chapter 2, the image on the stela's front shows K'inich Yat Ahk II at the apex of the vertical scene and above military lieutenants and captives. The Stela 12 text details a number of warfare events, including a defeat of Piedras Negras by Pomoná from 220 years before (in the sixth century) as well as their more recent victory over Pomoná. This sixth-century defeat corresponds with a time in which no stelae were erected at Piedras Negras and also may correlate with archaeological evidence for burning and destruction of Early Classic buildings at the site (Garrido 1998, 1999; Houston et al. 2001:76–77; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:101–102). Houston and others have argued that Stela 12's lengthy narrative and historical retrospection were in the service of vengeance for that long-ago defeat. Stela 12, then, uses the sculptural medium to celebrate and commemorate events of the present as well as to revisit and frame the history of Piedras Negras in relation to other polities.

Carving the image on Stela 12 in shallow relief, the sculptors—one of whom also worked on Stela 15—favored multi-figural pictorial narrative over the divine ruler's singular embodiment or three-dimensional presence.¹¹ The narrativity of Stela 12's image is more akin to the site's panels, the images of which portray multi-figural interactions, often retrospective, with texts that make connections across generations.

K'inich Yat Ahk II's Stelae 15 and 12 both were located on the O-13 upper terrace, on either side of the shrine. They offer two images of a proper ruler, one as pious ritual performer, the other as successful war chief accepting and displaying captives. Different but juxtaposed, together their presence is analogous to the serialization of rulers' images created by K'inich Yat Ahk II's ancestors on Structures R-9, R-5, J-4, and J-3, where the various sets of stelae displayed rulers who commemorated multiple period endings and endured through time. But in the juxtaposition of Stelae 15 and 12, sculptors also expanded the possibilities of what stelae could do, both in creating sacred embodiments and conveying narratives.

At the same time, Stela 12 obliquely emulates the niche monuments, particularly with the placement of the seated ruler at the top of the image and other people at lower levels, comparable to Stelae 33 and 14 (fig. 3.27). Stela 12 is a captive presentation scene and thus diverges from the niche stelae, but it makes visual reference to them. Its placement on the northeastern side of the O-13 upper terrace, aligned with Stela 14, Yo'nal Ahk III's niche monument, may have strengthened this implied analogy, for the stelae could be seen in one vista from the plaza.¹² Comparable to this alignment was that of Stelae 13 and 15 on the other side of the pyramid. These pairings of monuments from different generations emphasized links among them.

But like the other Structure O-13 stela, Stela 12 faced southwest. This was a consequence of being installed on a building where K'inich Yat Ahk II's predecessors had already established the southwesterly orientation. There may also have been meaning in its southward orientation as a gesture to the site's earliest stelae. As argued earlier, visual references among stelae—working in tandem with the direction they faced—established connections across stelae from multiple generations, binding them in a long-term tradition of the cyclicity of time, history, and rulership. As sculptures remained on view over time on Structure O-13 and in interaction with their material predecessors and successors, they figuratively and literally created, extended, and renewed relationships between present and past. In fact, what happened

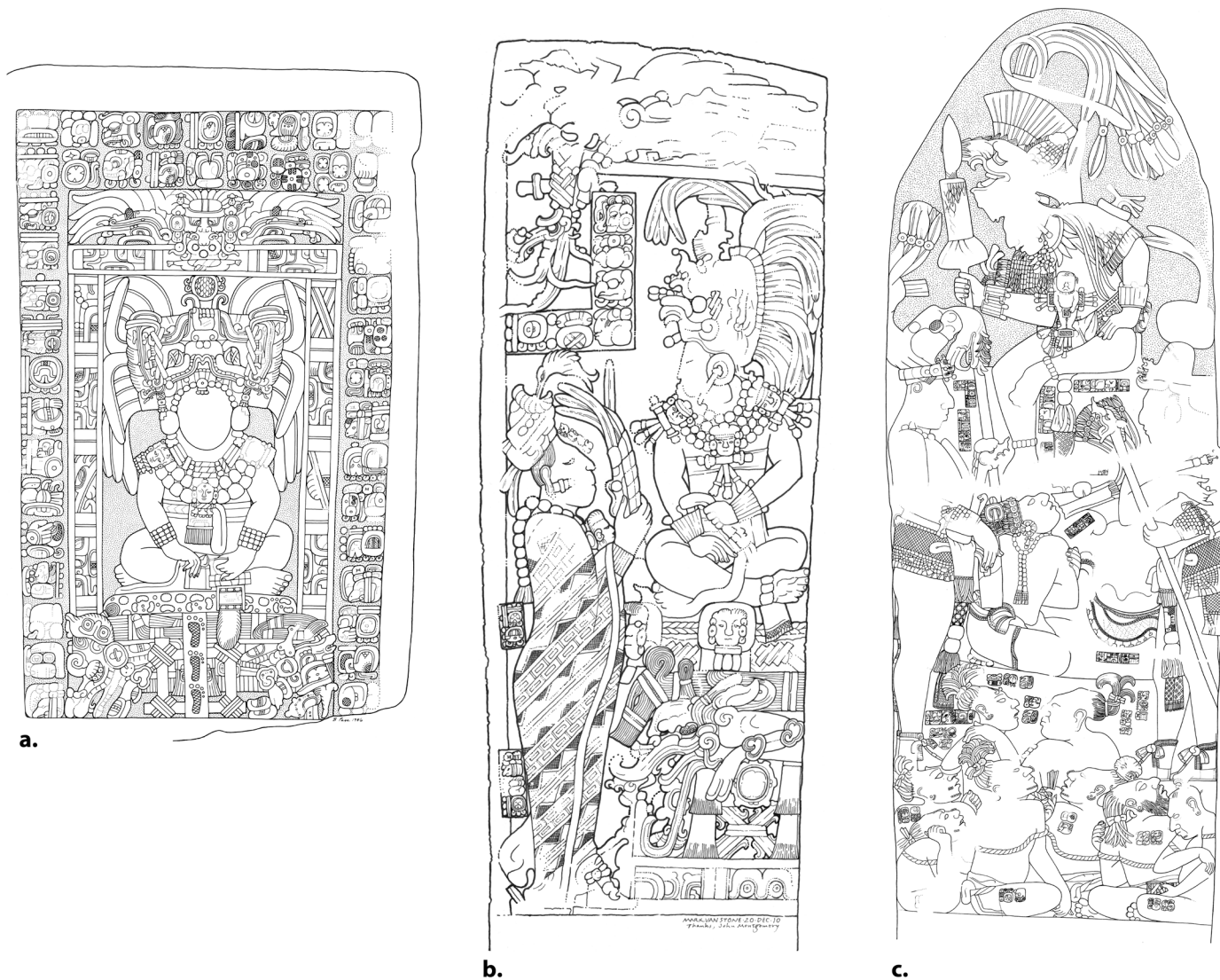


Figure 3.27. Piedras Negras Stelae 25, 33, and 12. a. Stela 25, of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I (Ruler 1), Structure R-9. Illustration by Barbara Page from *Maya History* by Tatiana Proskouriakoff, edited by Rosemary A. Joyce, Copyright © 1993. By permission of the University of Texas Press. b. Stela 33, of Itzam K'an Ahk I (Ruler 2), Structure R-5. Drawing by Mark Van Stone. Courtesy of Mark Van Stone. c. Stela 12, of K'inich Yat Ahk II (Ruler 7), Structure O-13. Drawing by David Stuart, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. (Images not to scale. Height of Stela 25 carving: 1.9 m; height of Stela 33 carving: 2.15 m; height of Stela 12 carving: 3.02 m.)

on the larger scale of the site becomes physically focused here, for monuments from several reigns are installed in relation to one another and create opportunities for creating cross-generational discourse within a smaller area.

This compression of the physical associations among stelae produced another shift in viewers' experience of sculptures in groups at Piedras Negras. The first was the direct association between the stelae of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I and Itzam K'an Ahk I, facing each other across the South Group Court. The second was the relationship between the stelae of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II and later rulers through processional pathways and the widened display of the stelae of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II and Itzam K'an Ahk II in two clusters on the Acropolis façade. The third was at Structure O-13 with the juxtaposition of sculptures from multiple reigns on the pyramid. But the other types of associations were still active, for the O-13 stelae were linked to the earlier stelae and their embodied rulers through the processional pathways across the site.

Continuity and Rupture

Despite the display of connections on Structure O-13, hints of drama and conflict appeared during the reigns of Rulers 5, 6, and 7 that possibly stemmed from quarrels related to succession because they were brothers (Escobedo 2004:279; Houston 2004:275). For example, Ha' K'in Xook (Ruler 6) does not mention Yo'nal Ahk III (Ruler 5) in any of his texts, a possible sign of turbulence (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008). In addition, there may have been conflict during the transfer of power between Ha' K'in Xook and K'inich Yat Ahk II (Ruler 7), and Ha' K'in Xook may have abdicated (see Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:107; Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Stuart 2004a:1).

Another sign of conflict relates to the succession between Itzam K'an Ahk II (Ruler 4) and Yo'nal Ahk III (Ruler 5). There is evidence that there had been another heir to Itzam K'an Ahk II named T'ul Chihk, but as recorded on Yaxchilán Hieroglyphic Stairway 1 and La Pasadita Lintel 1, Yaxchilán captured this heir in 759 CE. Yo'nal Ahk III became the one to succeed Itzam K'an Ahk II and did not mention T'ul Chihk in any extant texts. However, decades later, K'inich Yat Ahk II (Ruler 7) would make reference to T'ul Chihk on Panel 3 and thereby recuperate his memory (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Martin and Grube 2008:151). Also on Panel 3, K'inich Yat Ahk II connected himself to Itzam K'an Ahk II without mentioning the intervening Yo'nal Ahk III or Ha' K'in Xook.

There also are indications of rupture in the naming patterns of these last three rulers. Contrasting with the previous five dynasts, Ha' K'in Xook did not take a dynastic name (at least not one that is otherwise known), and K'inich Yat Ahk II took the name not of a recent predecessor but of the Early Classic ruler Yat Ahk I (Houston et al. 2001:70).

Nevertheless, despite the possible conflicts and the omissions, memory of these rulers was not erased, for Ha' K'in Xook and K'inich Yat Ahk II left their predecessors' sculptures on display and erected their own in physical association with them. Even if there had been conflicts or disgrace, these stelae were from predecessors who likely were considered divine ancestors. Indeed, the reigning ruler may have had to draw on their tradition to legitimize his rule and display stability and continuity, especially if there had been a succession dispute. The juxtaposition of monuments thus may have

been as much about political strategy as ancestor veneration. In short, the presence of sculptures in juxtaposition, some emulating earlier monuments, created a display of smooth succession and continuity that may or may not have aligned with actual historical events. This is analogous to many other cultures' practices of smoothing over ruptures in the construction of social memory (see Van Dyke and Alcock 2003:3).

Performance and Memory

Across the generations, the Yokib polity's rulers dedicated stelae that emulated and recalled the forms, compositions, themes, motifs, costume elements, and serialization of their predecessors' stelae. Monuments' physical placements and orientations were also crucial. The continued emulation of the forms of older sculptures and the orientation toward them indicate that they remained relevant and even powerful. They commemorated time's passage and became historical objects that embodied the past but endured and engaged with newer sculptures and people.

At the same time, their forms and physical placements functioned as material expressions that conveyed continuity as well as distinction across generations. Their pictorial references and physical interrelations conveyed continuity, and their clustering in various locations throughout the site center marked their differences. Their materiality—with or without their texts—thus expressed both sameness and difference, which allowed even those who could not read texts access to these notions.

The stelae were loci for worship of revered ancestors, but they also may have been sites for the retelling and reframing of the past in relation to the present. As suggested in this chapter, processions connecting the monuments could have activated the historical dialogues within texts and images and across sculptures, buildings, and architectural groups. And by experiencing them in series, people could expand or even reshape their recorded temporal and historical narratives, comparable to the reframing of history in Structure O-13's Panels 2 and 3 and Stela 12.

At times, the stela placements formed tableaux of enlivened, communicating sculptural embodiments of rulers, alive and deceased, allowing interaction of monuments in each other's y-ichnal. In other cases, the monuments faced not other monuments but processional pathways connecting them, requiring and encouraging people to travel among them and across the site. There came to be an unobstructed north–south pathway between the East and South Groups and an east–west pathway between the East and West Groups comprising a series of terraces and monumental stairways (fig. 3.23). These may have been used for processions and performances among the architectural groups, funerary pyramids, and sets of monuments. Such performances could have activated the connections among the generations of rulers and the buildings and monuments that embodied them.

Furthermore, with the elaboration of O-13 as a place for sculptural dedication and ceremonial performance in the mid- and late-eighth century, this pyramid could have been integrated into already existing—although modified—processional pathways. In fact, the sculptures of Rulers 5, 6, and 7 on Structure O-13 responded to and recalled the sculptures of their predecessors. Moreover, they were oriented toward the South Group and the polity's earliest stelae.

During K'inich Yat Ahk II's reign in the late eighth century, the pathway between the East and South Groups likely channeled processions commemorating ancestors buried in the South Group and embodied in its sculptures. Processions also may have celebrated the repeating cycles of time and history. Although part of the South Group may have been in ruins (Escobedo and Zamora 2001c:376–77; Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008), the area appears to have retained relevance and potency. In particular, the orientation of the O-13 sculptures toward the South Group, the processional path between them, and the strong visual connection between Stela 14 on Structure O-13 and Stelae 25 and 33 in the South Group are indications that the South Group remained relevant and important, particularly as a locus of early ancestors and their material remains.

The pathway between the East and West Groups may have linked the living to the dead as well, for the West Group contained ancestors' funerary pyramids and sculptural embodiments. However, the Acropolis also was the royal palace, for during K'inich Yat Ahk II's reign, if not earlier, Structure J-6 in the Acropolis held the throne room and K'inich Yat Ahk II's Throne 1 (see fig. I.11). During the reigns of Rulers 5, 6, and 7, processions could have gone from the royal palace and administrative quarters of the Acropolis to the O-13 shrine for monument dedications, celebrations of period endings, and offerings to ancestors. The spaces of the West and East Group Plazas were large and open and appropriate for dances or gatherings, and the wide pathways and stairways would have been ideal for processions.

Furthermore, the J-6 throne room was located near the burial place of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II and essentially in between the dramatic line of period-ending stelae of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II and Itzam K'an Ahk II, which flanked the monumental stairways of the Acropolis façade (fig. 3.28). K'inich Yat Ahk II—and probably his predecessors—thus reigned amid their ancestors' monuments, which visually and physically framed the entrance to the Acropolis and the route to the throne room (Houston 2004:275). While holding court in his throne room or standing in a more public display on an Acropolis terrace or stairway, the ruler would have been framed by sculptures from the past. These ancestral embodiments may have been considered still active, witnessing and providing validation for the living ruler's own body and image.

The Piedras Negras processional causeways are physical manifestations of the conceptual links among the architectural groups, and their forms may have guided ritual participants to move across them. Consequently, processions between and among these groups could have activated connections across the generations. These connections were inherent in the monuments, but people, whether through their sight, movement, or memory, also would have activated the links among the monuments. These imputed connections were enhanced, no doubt, by oral history and staged dramas. Moreover, the late eighth-century processional routes across the site also would have been integrated with the ascent and descent of pyramids.

In all of these contexts, what comes to the fore is the kinetic nature of the viewing and experience of these sculptures. On their own, sculptures may have enacted dialogues and participated in the commemoration of the cyclicity of time, but they also placed people amid them, both as witnesses and as agents who were guided by the sculptures' visual and physical forms, materiality, and orientations to weave together their narratives.

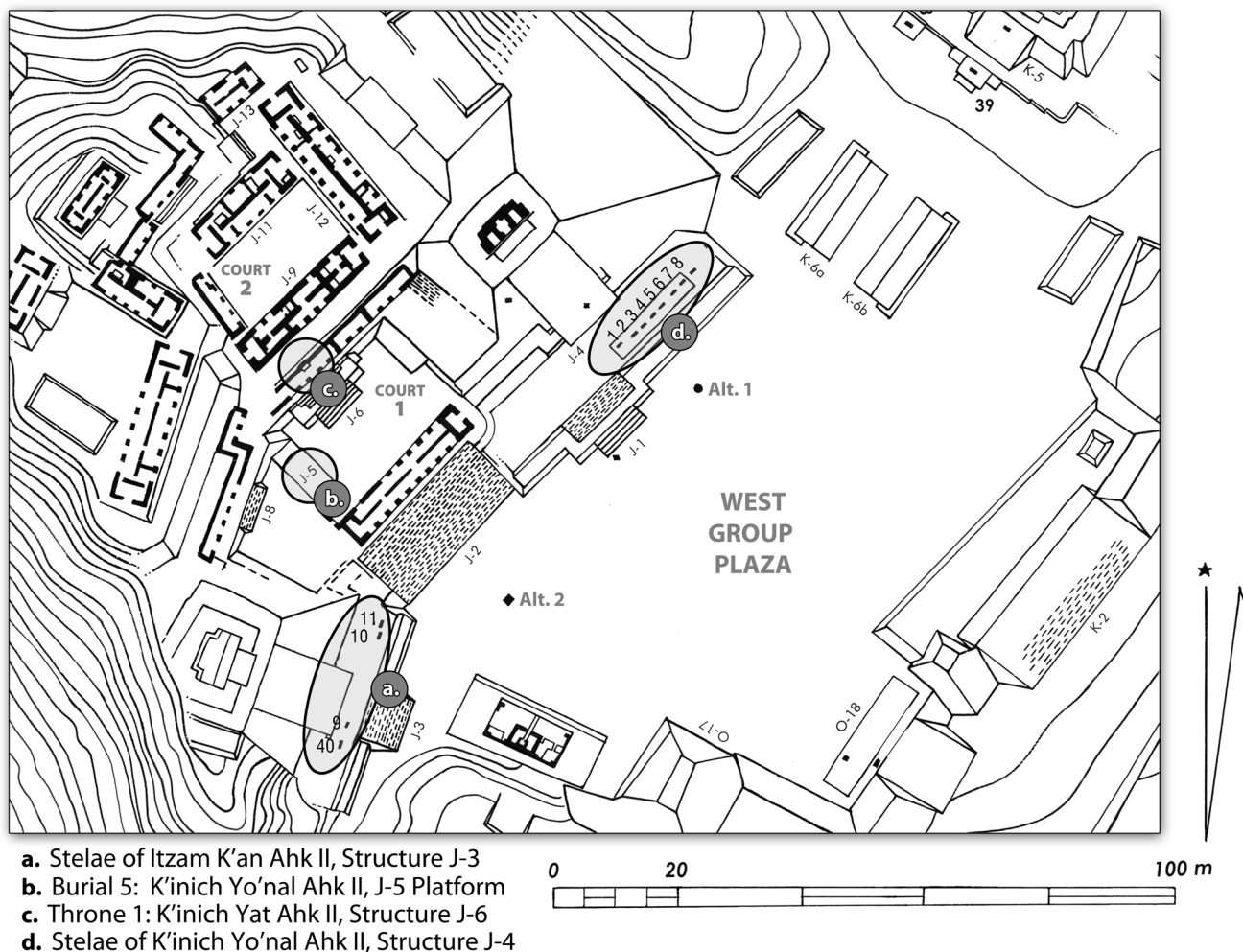


Figure 3.28. Plan of Piedras Negras West Group, with locations of the stelae of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II (Ruler 3) and Itzam K'an Ahk II (Ruler 4), the tomb of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II (Ruler 3), and Throne 1 of K'inich Yat Ahk II (Ruler 7). Detail, Map of Piedras Negras. Drawing by David Stuart and Ian Graham, after Parris and Proskouriakoff, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modifications by author and Kevin Cain, INSIGHT.

Conclusion

Piedras Negras sculptures changed over time, particularly as the rulers portrayed on stelae died and became ancestors, and as newer sculptures were placed in arrangements with older sculptures. Over time, most of the older monuments at Piedras Negras remained in the places where they were originally installed. They became connections to ancestors, and continuing interaction with them would have been analogous to other practices of ancestor veneration, including commemorative burning ceremonies. Furthermore, newer sculptures were placed in dialogue with them. Both older and newer sculptures were potent agents that may have been considered able to witness the actions of other monuments and living people.

The multiple stelae also marked the continuing passage of time and the periodic renewal of time, community, and cosmos. But while the transitions between reigns were not always smooth, they were presented as such, and the sculptures' emphasis on tradition created a semblance of continuity, even when—or especially when—there had been ruptures or conflicts.

Emulation and alignment of sculptures also were part of a larger system of making associations across time and generations through diverse but complementary historiographic practices that used narrations, materials, and performances to venerate ancestors and emphasize continuity. Examples of narrations are those in panel texts that juxtapose actions of rulers of different generations and imply correspondence. Texts also narrated rulers' performances of rites commemorating their ancestors. Through the inscription of these events, descendants displayed their association with earlier generations. At the same time, those ceremonies, in which rulers censed the material remains of their ancestors in tombs or in funerary pyramid shrines, would have constituted material and performative links with the past. These rites would have employed multiple media, including recitation, song, movement, burning, aromas, and the offered objects.

Other examples of material links between present and past are the placement of stelae in front of ancestors' funerary pyramids and the orientation of newer stelae to older ones. But these also could take on a narrative dimension, particularly through the discourse generated at the intersection of sculptures, which could have been expressed in recitations and travel among the monuments. These performances inevitably changed over time, both because of time's passage—for each ruler had to revise the past as it led to his present—and because of the reconfiguration of the site and its architectural groups and causeways.

In short, as the monuments remained on view in the places where they were dedicated, there was both transformation and persistence of meaning. The sculptural embodiments of rulers were transformed into loci of memory for still-powerful ancestors, and the monuments remained relevant and revered. The older and newer monuments interacted with one another, and the movements of people further activated the discourse among them. And through these actions, Maya people at Piedras Negras in the seventh and eighth centuries created visual, material, and performative displays of tradition, continuity, and communal memory.

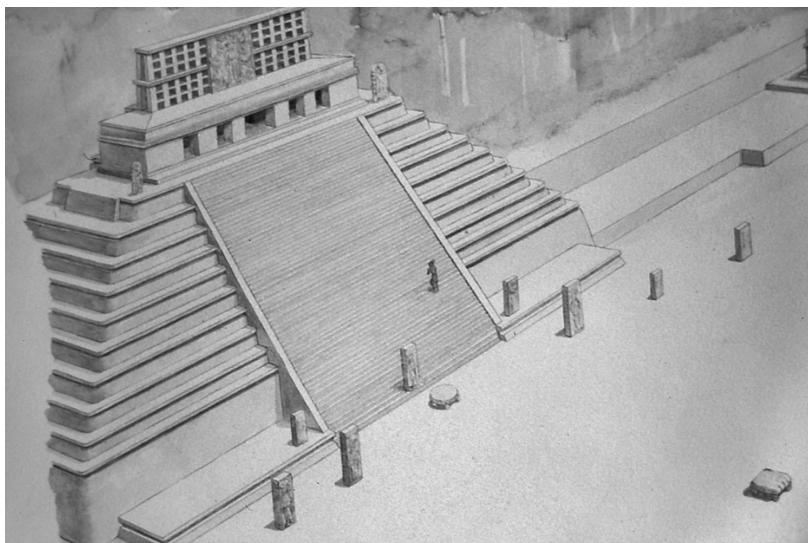
Structure O-13 and the Materiality of Memory

Our analysis of Classic period Piedras Negras engagement with sculptures comes into sharper focus with a closer look at Structure O-13, the site of Itzam K'an Ahk II's tomb and the stelae of the polity's last three known rulers, Yo'nal Ahk III, Ha' K'in Xook, and K'inich Yat Ahk II (figs. 3.24, 4.1). The previous chapter examined the relationships among these stelae and those of other generations and how the associations among them created and inspired historical discourse across the landscape. Yet Structure O-13 was a locus for other kinds of sculptural engagement and historical discourse, as well.

In the last phase of Structure O-13, during K'inich Yat Ahk II's reign, the Maya installed two new carved panels, Panel 3 (circa 782 CE) and Panel 1 (undated), and reset an older panel, Panel 2 (circa 667 CE).¹ In addition, Miscellaneous Sculptured Stone 1 (circa 639 CE), a small broken altar, was buried in the shrine's floor, and the broken Panel 12 (circa 518 CE) was reused in a pier in the shrine. This chapter focuses on the late eighth-century engagement with the past at Structure O-13 through the creation of new sculptures, the manipulation of older ones, and the performance of ceremonial rites involving the sculptures, the building, and associated ancestors.

In previous chapters, I argued that Piedras Negras sculptures changed over time, but there were few physical changes to them. The most notable change was the pecking of faces, but otherwise the monuments remained physically stable. Even so, the meaning and reception of them changed as historical, social, and physical contexts changed around them. Sculptures at Structure O-13, where the Maya reset and buried several older carved stones, were also physically altered. The presence, placement, and content of these older sculptures and some of the newer ones installed on and in Structure O-13 point to K'inich Yat Ahk II's effort to make connections with and revise the past. Several of the newer and older sculptures reshape histories of the kingdom, especially

Figure 4.1. Piedras Negras Structure O-13, 8th century CE; watercolor rendering, ca. 2004. Drawn by Mark Child and painted by Heather Hurst. Courtesy of Heather Hurst.



in relation to other polities, including Yaxchilán. This reshaping of historical narratives took place both through the creation of new narrations and the relocation, resetting, and burial of older ones. The engagement with sculptures and engagement with history on this building, therefore, were intertwined.

Such transformations may open a window onto Classic Maya perceptions of these objects. How, for example, were the sculptures physically and conceptually transformed when reused? And what were the new relationships with other objects around them? These relationships are manifest in visible juxtapositions of sculptures or in non-visible associations with buried sculptures that continued to act, both as offerings to buildings and as a vehicle for ancestor veneration and political legitimization (see O'Neil 2009). Moreover, as argued in previous chapters, the material nature and physical context of sculptures were of utmost importance, both in tandem with and beyond any pictorial or textual content carved on their surfaces.

There is both textual and archaeological evidence for the performance of ceremonies on Structure O-13. The archaeological evidence includes caches deposited during the building's construction as well as burned matter from rites over the course of its use. These rites entailed vertical movement up the pyramid that was comparable to processions ascending or descending other Piedras Negras pyramids. The O-13 caches and offering ceremonies served to sanctify the building and venerate ancestors. In fact, some of the cached items—including reused stone sculptures—establish explicit connections to named ancestors. The reuse of objects articulates with the narrations and performance of memory in the service of making contact with the past for ancestor veneration and historical discourse. Such reused objects therefore provide a case study to explore the materiality of history and memory.

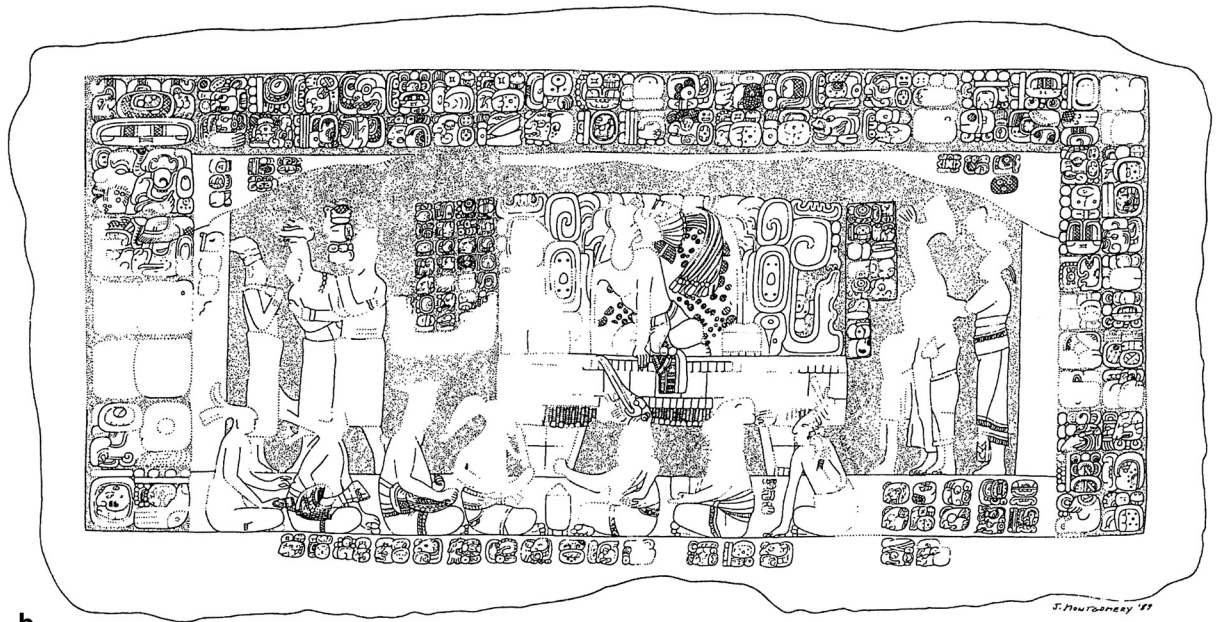
Structure O-13 was a highly charged place, a place of ceremonies that included copious fires and objects offered to deities, ancestors, sculptures, and the building that housed them. Over time, Structure O-13 became a place saturated with memory and a locus for the creation, display, and performance of memory. Its character may have resulted from its own history of use and its history of place, particularly as a building with multiple phases that was converted into Itzam K'an Ahk II's funerary pyramid. Also significant was its location at the nexus of processional pathways between the South and West Groups, a location that must have inspired the transformation of this building into a place of memory for the polity's historical span. Once developed, the building and its sculptures would have inspired performances relating to community and cosmic renewal and to the commemoration and performance of personages, events, and places of historical and sacred import.

Panel 3: Narration and History

Panel 3 was carved circa 782 CE in the reign of K'inich Yat Ahk II, but the sculpted image portrays his father, Itzam K'an Ahk II, in 749 CE. The image is a scene from the past, showing Itzam K'an Ahk II in the midst of the celebration marking his first k'atun in office. Panel 3's hieroglyphic text covers a time span from 749 to 782 CE and recounts events from the lives of Itzam K'an Ahk II and K'inich Yat Ahk II (fig. 4.2).² The textual narrative begins in 749 with the celebration of the k'atun anniversary of Itzam K'an Ahk II's accession; this celebration included dancing, drinking of chocolate, and a visit from a Yaxchilán ruler named Yopaat Bahlam. The narrative



a.



b.

Figure 4.2. Piedras Negras Panel 3, limestone, ca. 782 CE. In collection of Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala. a. Photograph by author. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala. b. Drawing by John Montgomery © Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org.

then moves forward in time and mentions Itzam K'an Ahk II's death and burial and then, twenty-four years later, a ritual burning of his tomb in 782 by K'inich Yat Ahk II (Escobedo 2004:277; Grube 1999:124; Houston and Stuart 2001:69; M. Miller 1993:396–97; M. Miller and Martin 2004:130; Morley 1937–38, 3:221–29; Schele and Grube 1995:111; Schele and Mathews 1991:231–34).

The focal point of the Panel 3 image is Itzam K'an Ahk II seated on a throne, leaning forward and gripping the throne's edge with one hand. Surrounding him are fourteen standing and seated attendants and visitors; these include the heir to the throne, members of the court, and visitors from Yaxchilán (Houston and Stuart 1998:79; 2001:72; Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Martin and Grube 2008:149). The figures inhabiting the room make slight movements, such as raising a hand, tapping a neighbor's back, or crossing their arms. Their gestures are intimations of motion, speech, touch, and sight, as they communicate inside the throne room. In addition, among the small incised texts within the image are first- and second-person spoken captions, in which characters in the scene speak to one another (Stuart, Houston, and Robertson 1999:42–43, 205). These quotations further enliven the scene, signaling an event in progress and complementing the action of each figure.

Panel 3 is analogous to other posthumous stone panels produced in the kingdom that portray ancestors in scenes from their lives. One example is Panel 4, commissioned by Itzam K'an Ahk I and installed on Structure R-5, apparently the burial hill of his father, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I. Another is Panel 15, commissioned by K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II and set on Structure J-4, which may be Itzam K'an Ahk I's burial hill (Escobedo and Zamora 1999:217; 2001b:205; Houston and Escobedo 2001:620–21; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:103–105; Houston, Escobedo, Terry, et al. 2000:10).

Panel 3's text, comparable to that of the other panels, narrates a ceremony that K'inich Yat Ahk II performed at his father's tomb decades after his death. This narration corresponds with the evidence that Burial 13, beneath the plaza in front of Structure O-13, was reentered and burned (Escobedo 2004). The narrated interaction correlates with other material relationships evident on the building, including K'inich Yat Ahk II's installation of Stelae 15 and 12 on Structure O-13. As discussed in chapter 3, the textual narration of the relationship between ancestor and successor on Panel 3 and other panels was analogous to the material relationship between ancestor's tomb and successor's stelae on the funerary pyramid. In these cases, the Classic period Maya used both narrative and material forms to shape and display social memory, and each makes explicit or lays bare processes of the other. In this way, Panel 3 and Structure O-13 followed in the tradition of the site's earlier pyramids and panels. K'inich Yat Ahk II also made contact with his father by portraying him in the panel's image, through which he brought his ancestor into the present.

But the motivation for making Panel 3 appears to be not only ancestor veneration but also the polity's relations with Yaxchilán, specifically, the visit of Yopaat Bahlam to Itzam K'an Ahk II's court in 749 CE. Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán had a history of alternating alliance and conflict during previous centuries; this history was narrated in text and image on sculptures from both polities. In contrast to multiple bellicose images that narrate episodes of conflict, Piedras Negras Panel 3 depicts a moment of alliance and celebration. The scene is staged in the intimate space of a palace room,

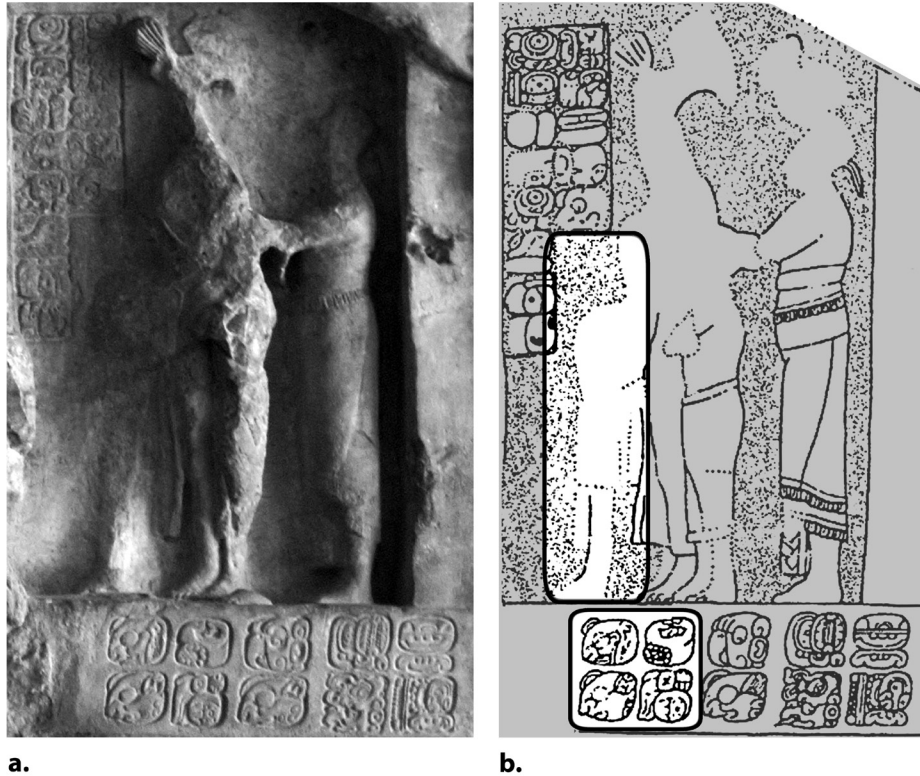


Figure 4.3. Detail of Piedras Negras Panel 3, with damaged figure and name of T'ul Chihk highlighted.

a. Photograph by author.

Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala.

b. Drawing by John

Montgomery © Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org.

without any military overtones. The choice to depict a celebratory scene may have been attributable to contemporary politics circa 782 CE, perhaps to foster diplomacy between allied polities. The depiction of the 749 CE celebration not only commemorated Itzam K'an Ahk II but also recalled and renewed the inter-polity alliance from the past.

Notably, some of the figures portrayed on Panel 3 are named with important titles but are not mentioned in other extant sources from their polity of origin. For example, standing to Itzam K'an Ahk II's left (the observer's right) is the figure—now mostly destroyed—of a child named T'ul Chihk who bears the title *ch'ok yokib ajaw*, or young Yokib lord (fig. 4.3). This is a title used for heirs, although there is no record of his ascending to the throne. In fact, there is no other extant reference to him at Piedras Negras. As noted in chapter 3, Houston, Escobedo, and Webster (2008) suggest T'ul Chihk was Itzam K'an Ahk II's named successor, but he did not accede because he was taken captive by Yaxchilán under Bird Jaguar IV, as recorded on La Pasadita Lintel 1. K'inich Yat Ahk II used the opportunity of Panel 3's retrospective image to portray T'ul Chihk as the named heir in Itzam K'an Ahk II's court. K'inich Yat Ahk II thereby brought T'ul Chihk into the polity's visible history; in doing so, he displayed a pristine image of him before he was captured and did not mention his demise.

In a similar case, the visiting Yaxchilán ruler Yopaat Bahlam, shown also on Panel 3, is not mentioned on any extant monument from Yaxchilán. He may have reigned

during the interregnum between Itzamnaaj Bahlam III (who died in 742 CE) and Bird Jaguar IV (who acceded in 752 CE); but if he did, he was erased from history, possibly because of internal and external political conflict or disgrace (Escobedo 2004:277; Grube 1999; Grube and Martin 1998:132). Indeed, Bird Jaguar IV may have erased him from memory. After his accession, Bird Jaguar IV dedicated numerous monuments demonstrating his right to rule. Some are scenes of ceremonies that purportedly took place years before the sculptures were made. The production and display of these scenes may have been part of an attempt to smooth over a rupture in the succession and present an image of Bird Jaguar IV as the named successor to Itzamnaaj Bahlam III (Herring 2005:155; P. Mathews 1988:135, 155; Noble Bardsley 1994:91; O'Neil 2005:157–82; Proskouriakoff 1963:163–64; Schele and Freidel 1990:272–76; Tate 1992:125–28, 133). Panel 3, then, recovers and celebrates the memory not only of Itzam K'an Ahk II but also of T'ul Chihk and Yopaat Bahlam, two figures who were contemporaries but had been lost to—or erased from—history at their respective polities.

Yet Panel 3's text also evokes an earlier moment in the relationship between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán, for a second-person caption incised in front of Itzam K'an Ahk II, in which he speaks to the Yaxchilán visitors standing before him, mentions the accession of *a-mam* (your grandfather/ancestor), Bat Jaguar of Yaxchilán. His accession is said to have taken place under the authority of the Piedras Negras ruler (Stuart, Houston, and Robertson 1999:42–43, 205).³ Martin and Grube (2008:149) interpret this text as part of a “history lecture” that Itzam K'an Ahk II gives to the Yaxchilán visitors about the two polities' past relations; they further suggest that this recounting of history had political overtones. The reference to a Yaxchilán accession under the authority of Piedras Negras was a reiteration of that earlier subordination. However, incised into the background of the panel, it is less prominent than the image's convivial scene.

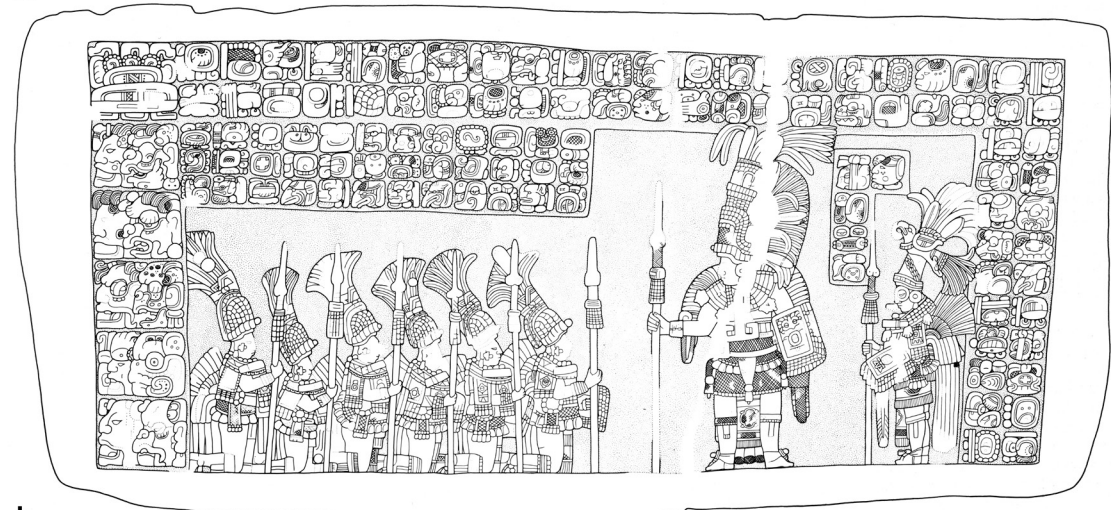
The contemporary motivation for evoking a past alliance with Yaxchilán is unclear, for there is no mention on Panel 3 or any other monument from Piedras Negras of the Yaxchilán rulers—Itzamnaaj Bahlam IV and K'inich Tatbu Skull IV—who reigned at the same time as K'inich Yat Ahk II. The name of K'inich Yat Ahk II, however, would appear several decades later in an inscription on Yaxchilán Lintel 10, where K'inich Tatbu Skull IV named him as his captive, circa 808 CE (Stuart 1998b).

Panel 2: Narrative and Material Dialogues

The subject matter of Panel 2, another panel on Structure O-13, also pertained to past relations between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán. In contrast to Panel 3's convivial scene, Panel 2's image had a military theme. Panel 2, dated 9.11.15.0.0 (25 July 667 CE), was reset on the last building phase of Structure O-13, during K'inich Yat Ahk II's reign (fig. 4.4). At the time of its making in the seventh century, the panel created discourse with its past through pictorial and textual narration. The eighth-century resetting of Panel 2 on Structure O-13 constituted a new phase in the object's life history in which this discourse was expanded.



a.



b.

Figure 4.4. Piedras Negras Panel 2 (Lintel 2), limestone, 667 CE. a. Photograph courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #00-36-20/C2740. Digital File #96350006. b. Drawing by David Stuart. Courtesy of David Stuart.

Panel 2 is a sculpture of Itzam K'an Ahk I and bears an image of the standing king wearing an elaborate costume and a prominent feathered headdress. A smaller figure stands behind him (at the right of the panel). Named in a caption as Joy Chitam Ahk, with the title *ch'ok yokib ajaw*, the smaller figure likely is the heir to the throne. Both ruler and heir have rectangular shields and costume elements reminiscent of Teotihuacan. Six armed warriors dressed in similar Teotihuacan-influenced costumes kneel in front, and captions identify them as having come from other sites in the region: Yaxchilán, Bonampak, and Lacanhá (Martin and Grube 2008:143–44; Schele and Miller 1986:136–37, 148–50). This scene shows the deference of these warriors to the Piedras Negras ruler, but the warriors are armed—this is an image of regional alliance.

The timing of the depicted event is ambiguous, for Panel 2's text narrates two events from different moments in time and presents them as parallel. The text begins in 658 (9.11.6.2.1 3 Imix 19 Keh, or 21 October 658 CE), when Itzam K'an Ahk I participated in a ceremony of the taking of the *ko'haw*, the Teotihuacan-style plated war helmet, on the one-k'atun anniversary of the death of his father, Yo'nal Ahk I. He undertakes this event in the company of deities (Fitzsimmons 1998:272; Martin and Grube 2008:141–44). The text then jumps to the past, over 150 years back, to the early sixth century, on 9.3.16.0.5 (11 November 510 CE), when Yat Ahk I participated in the same *ko'haw* helmet ceremony (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008; Martin and Grube 2008:141–44; Schele and Miller 1986:149). The text specifies that he performed this ceremony in the company of a person named Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun, who bears the title *och k'in kaloomte'*, an eminent title associated with Teotihuacan. This phrase implies a hierarchical relationship, with Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun, who oversees the ceremony, superior to Yat Ahk I. The naming of Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun also makes reference to an early sixth-century Teotihuacan affiliation or presence at Piedras Negras (Martin and Grube 2008:17, 141, 143–44). A distance number returns the narrative to the year 658 with a re-expression of Itzam K'an Ahk I's participation in the *ko'haw* helmet ceremony; this restatement emphasizes the link between the two events.⁴ The rest of the text concerns Itzam K'an Ahk I; stated events include his accession and commemoration of the 9.11.15.0.0 (25 July 667 CE) period ending, the panel's dedication date.

The presentation of the *ko'haw* war-helmet events as analogous draws a connection between the protagonists Yat Ahk I in the early sixth century and Itzam K'an Ahk I in the seventh century (Schele and Miller 1986:148–49). Because the two helmet ceremonies are parallel, there is ambiguity as to which event is depicted in the image. Schele and Miller state that the image portrays the later Itzam K'an Ahk I event. However, Stuart (2000:498–99) and Martin and Grube (2008:144) suggest it depicts the earlier event, with Yat Ahk I as protagonist. Martin and Grube note that the feathers touch Yat Ahk I's name and may be a visual cue pointing to the earlier protagonist, though they also maintain that the panel makes “a powerful analogy between the two periods.”

The depiction may function as a portrayal of both Yat Ahk I and Itzam K'an Ahk I, with the ambiguity intentional in order to strengthen the connection made between them in the text. Moreover, it may not even matter which is portrayed but that both are evoked. In fact, Itzam K'an Ahk I may have reenacted the ceremony his forebear performed as a way to make the link between them explicit and tangible. At the same

time, similar to other Piedras Negras carved panels, the image portrays a moment from the past, in which Yat Ahk I is posthumously depicted 150 years after an event, which made his action current in the seventh century.

By invoking Yat Ahk I, Itzam K'an Ahk I returned to a time in which the Yokib polity may have had direct contact with Teotihuacan, which was a thriving, powerful state during Yat Ahk I's reign. Indeed, excavations found Teotihuacan-related artifacts cached in front of Piedras Negras Structure R-5. Hruby (1999:376–78) notes two deposits with seven prismatic obsidian blades from the Central Mexican obsidian source at Pachuca. In addition, Escobedo and Zamora (2001b:201, 206) suggest that a recovered *candelero*—an object used for burning incense in Teotihuacan residential altars—is further evidence of Teotihuacan contact.

These objects may have been obtained from contact with Teotihuacan during its heyday, retained as heirlooms and later cached. Houston, Escobedo, and Webster (2008) note that these items were few and may imply only limited contact. Other evidence for early sixth-century affiliation with Teotihuacan in the region comes from a carved wooden box discovered in a cave in eastern Tabasco. The text on this box includes the name of Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun; this is most probably the same prominent *och k'in kaloomte'* who was named on Piedras Negras Panel 2 (Anaya, Guenter, and Mathews 2002:2–3; Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008, citing Marc Zender, personal communication, 2005).

By Itzam K'an Ahk I's time, Teotihuacan was in decline, if not already destroyed. Yet during his reign and later, Piedras Negras and other Maya polities recalled the memory of Teotihuacan by using Teotihuacan warrior imagery on stelae and panels. K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I and Itzam K'an Ahk I and their successors drew on connections to Teotihuacan and its legendary military power in representations of their own military costume (Stone 1989; Stuart 2000:498–501).⁵ With the creation of Panel 2, then, Itzam K'an Ahk I displayed links not only with his predecessor Yat Ahk I and the polity's earlier history but also with the legendary Teotihuacan.

But Panel 2's seventh-century creation was only one phase in the panel's life history, for it was reset on an eighth-century version of Structure O-13. Morley was the first to propose that Panel 2 had been on display elsewhere and later was moved to O-13. His suggestion for its original provenance was in the South Group with Itzam K'an Ahk I's other monuments, including Stela 36, with which it shares the period ending 9.11.15.0.0, and which was placed in front of Structure R-5 (Morley 1937–38, 3:78, 84, 92, 96). Panel 2 once may have been installed on Structure R-5 or another building in the South Group. Alternatively, it may have been displayed on an earlier version of O-13.

Regardless of whether it was already at Structure O-13 and reset on its last phase or carried to Structure O-13 for reuse, what is important is that it was installed on this building in the late eighth century during K'inich Yat Ahk II's reign. K'inich Yat Ahk II thereby made this panel and the ancestors it mentioned—Yat Ahk I and Itzam K'an Ahk I—current and relevant. Yet the resetting of Panel 2 was only one way that K'inich Yat Ahk II made a link with Yat Ahk I; he was also Yat Ahk I's namesake (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008). His reuse of the name and his resetting of Panel 2 were parallel acts that created a link with a predecessor from over two hundred sixty years before his reign.

Panels 2 and 3 on Structure O-13

In the next phase of its life history, Panel 2 was installed near Panel 3 on Structure O-13. Panels 2 and 3 were of similar size.⁶ The panels also share compositional similarities. Each has an overarching text and inset image, and in both images, the rulers are in a higher position, with one or more people behind and others in front (see figs. 4.2 and 4.4). In addition, the seated subordinate lords on the floor of Panel 3's throne room recall the young warriors kneeling in front of Panel 2's ruler. There are thematic links as well, for both depict a ruler, his heir, and subordinate figures, and both deal with interactions between Piedras Negras and other polities in the region, especially Yaxchilán. There is no question that Panel 3 was designed to recall Panel 2, and the basic similarities—both their comparable content and parallel forms and placement—would have encouraged comparison of the two panels.

Notwithstanding their similarities, the panels are quite different, for Panel 3 is a court gathering, whereas Panel 2 is a military presentation. In addition, on Panel 3 there is neither mention of the och k'in kaloomte' personage who had appeared in Panel 2's text, nor any other Teotihuacan imagery. The memory of that great but fallen polity was further away and may have become less important. Also, Panel 3's composition is more complex and has twice as many figures as Panel 2. The personages depicted in the Panel 3 royal court scene bear a wide variety of titles, including **a-na-bi** (*anab* or *anib*), *sajal*, *baaj sajal*, *ch'ok*, and *ch'ok yokib ajaw*, an array much more diverse than Panel 2's *ajaw* and *ch'ok yokib ajaw* titles.

Panel 3's sculptors probably needed to include more people due to the increasing importance of secondary nobles in Maya polities in the eighth century. This multiplicity of titles is part of a trend in the eighth century that reflects a changing political situation with more people with various roles and titles in the constellation of Maya royal courts (Houston 2004; Houston and Stuart 2001:72, 74–75; Jackson 2005:164–73). The ruler's authority may have come to depend on the participation of these other people, and depicting them and their contributions may have been a means of inspiring loyalty.

The two panels also show different relationships between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán. Panel 2, in particular, depicts the submission of Yaxchilán, Bonampak, and Lacanhá warriors to the Piedras Negras k'uhul ajaw. Because they are fully dressed and armed, there is a sense of collaboration and alliance with their Piedras Negras overlord. On Panel 3, in contrast, everyone has been invited to the party, and several grasp the cylinder vessels holding the prized chocolate drink.

Despite the differences, and perhaps because of them, it is significant that Panel 2, created more than a hundred years before Panel 3, was reset on Structure O-13 near Panel 3. With their juxtaposition, new complexities of temporality emerge across Panels 2 and 3, for at their intersection additional relationships arise across the generations, not only during the reigns of K'inich Yat Ahk II and Itzam K'an Ahk II in the eighth century but also during the reigns of Itzam K'an Ahk I in the seventh century and Yat Ahk I in the sixth.

Displaying Panels 2 and 3 together allowed their differences to surface. Installed next to Panel 3's scene of celebration with lords from Yaxchilán and Piedras Negras, Panel 2 was a visible reminder of Yaxchilán's past submission to Piedras Negras, dis-

playing, as Mary Miller (1991:11) suggests, an image of the perfect world structure that recalled “a time of glory,” with Piedras Negras at the fore of the Usumacinta River region. The similarities and juxtaposition of Panels 2 and 3—each telling a story about earlier relations between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán—may have encouraged their reading as a series and a comparison of the events and persons recounted and represented on them.

Panel 12: Erasure, Preservation, and Proximity

The scenes of alliance on Panels 2 and 3 contrasted with the hostile scene on another panel associated with Structure O-13—Panel 12, from 518 CE, the earliest extant dated sculpture from Piedras Negras (fig. 4.5). The University of Pennsylvania project found Panel 12 buried in the masonry of the last phase of Structure O-13’s superstructure, the same construction phase in which Panels 2 and 3 were installed. Visual and thematic similarities across the three panels suggest that the depositing of Panel 12 in the building was intentional and a means to keep these objects together.

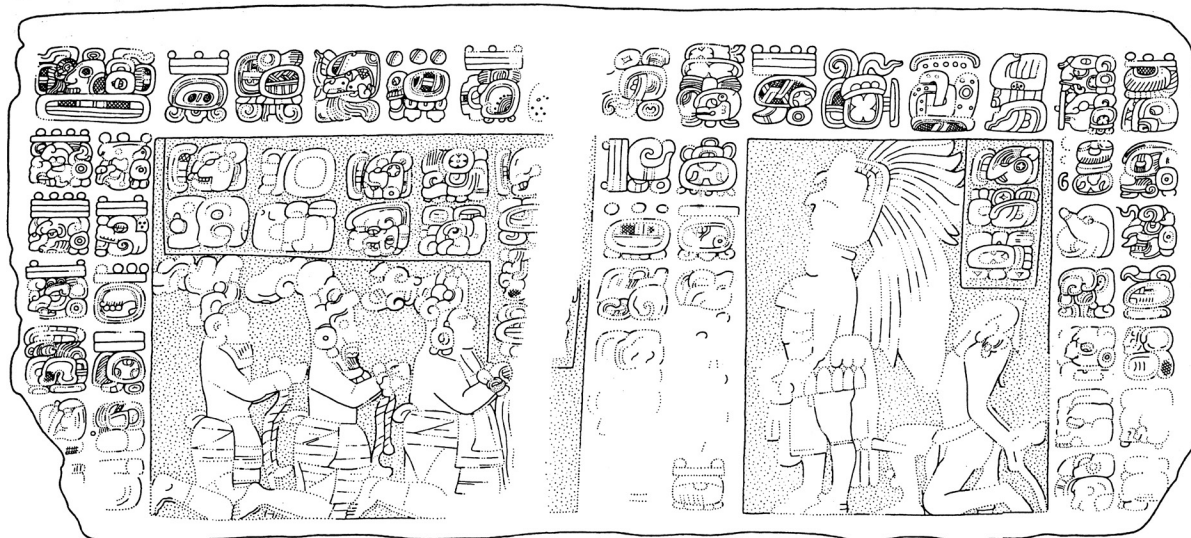
The Panel 12 image is of a standing ruler wearing a prominent feathered headdress; three bound captives kneel before him, and one kneels behind. Those kneeling in front wear headdresses and more clothing than the nearly naked one behind, but all are captives, with hands tied in front or behind them. The three in front are named; one is Knot-eye Jaguar I, a Yaxchilán ruler of the early sixth century (Martin and Grube 2008:141; P. Mathews 1988:76–77, 95; Schele 1991:15) (fig. 4.6). The two kneeling behind him come from other polities in the region; Stuart (2007b:1) reads one emblem glyph as *Lakam-tuun* and suggests this polity was located on the Lacantún River, a tributary of the upper Usumacinta. Stuart observes that the other captive is from the site of Santa Elena, on the San Pedro Mártir River (see map I.1). In short, all three captives are from polities located on major waterways in the region—the Usumacinta, Lacantún, and San Pedro Mártir rivers.

The Panel 12 text recounts a series of events culminating in a temple censuring; these events fall within a four-year span, from 514 to 518 CE. The text begins with a 9.3.19.12.12 date (30 June 514 CE). The verb and subject are broken, though it may have recorded the accession of a ruler nicknamed Ruler C (Martin and Grube 2008:141). The commemoration of the 9.4.0.0.0 (16 October 514 CE) period ending follows; the agent’s name is broken, though it most likely was Ruler C as well. Here he is named as the *yajaw och k’in kaloomte’* (the ajaw of the west kaloomte’). *Och k’in kaloomte’* is the same Teotihuacan-related title as on Panel 2, and here the phrase names the *och k’in kaloomte’* as an overseer of Ruler C (Martin and Grube 2008:141). What follows is a distance number of three years and seventeen days, leading to 5 Kaban 0 Sak (9.4.3.0.17, or 17 October 517 CE), but the verb is missing. The next recognizable text is a date, 7 Imix 19 Pohp (19 April 518 CE), and the action is *el naah uwaybil yotoot*—a censuring event at a sleeping or dreaming house—of gods who are named in the text. The final eroded glyphs may have named the ceremony’s protagonist, most likely Ruler C.

The captive presentation event portrayed in the image most certainly corresponds with one of the four narrated events and thus must have happened within the 514–18 CE span. This timing is plausible, for a ruler named Knot-eye Jaguar reigned at Yaxchilán at this time (P. Mathews 1988:76–77, 95). It appears he was not



a.



b.

Figure 4.5. Piedras Negras Panel 12, limestone, ca. 518 CE. a. Photograph by author. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala. b. Drawing by John Montgomery © Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org.

sacrificed, though, for he reigned until 9.4.11.8.16, in 526 CE, when K'inich Tatbu Skull II acceded; Knot-eye Jaguar's reign thus may have extended after Panel 12's captive display, either because he was released or because he ruled as a Piedras Negras vassal (Stuart 2007b:1).⁷

Panel 12 was never on display in Structure O-13; instead, it was hauled from another part of the site—probably the South Group—and buried in the masonry of the last phase of O-13's superstructure. Houston (personal communication, 2005) proposes that Panel 12's eroded state suggests an original provenance in Structure R-16, a ruined structure that was not used or rebuilt after the Early Classic (Escobedo and Zamora 2001c:376–77). Panel 12 had been broken in half, and both halves, already eroded and covered in plaster, were buried in the O-13 shrine (Mason 1935:549, 552; Satterthwaite 1958:69) (fig. 4.7). The archaeological context of the left half was not recorded. The right half was found “re-used as a corner stone in a pier against the inner wall of the outer corridor to the observer's left of the doorway into the two inner chambers” (Morley 1937–38, 3:28). The back of the stone formed the line of the wall, and the carved surface faced inward and was not visible (Mason 1935:552). Eroded and covered with plaster, Panel 12 had been deemed unfit for display. Its movement and burial in the O-13 masonry may have been the result of laborers grasping for building material with which to augment Structure O-13.

However, several factors suggest there was intention and meaning in its move to and burial in Structure O-13. First, the Classic period Maya took great care in burying various items in buildings. They placed caches containing a range of items in many buildings, including Structure O-13, described in more detail below. Although visible during their dedication, these caches had a purpose outside their visibility and, once buried, acted through their material qualities in specific locations.

Second, the similarities and differences between Panels 2 and 12 suggest that Panel 2 originally was made to replace, complement, or recall Panel 12. Panel 2 is similar to Panel 12 in shape and size (Morley 1937–38, 3:29, 93).⁸ Although made one hundred fifty years apart, they are similar in composition and subject matter, for each depicts a standing king with individuals kneeling in front of him, and texts frame both scenes (see O'Neil 2010) (fig. 4.8). In addition, both portray Piedras Negras rulers in warrior roles, and both concern relations with Yaxchilán. The events stated on Panel 12 are nearly contemporaneous with the earlier set of events narrated on Panel 2. The Panel 12 events fall within a span from 514 to 518 CE, and its captive presentation would have taken place within that period, which was only four to eight years after the 510 CE event on Panel 2. Finally, both panels make reference to an *och k'in kaloomte'* from this time; indeed, they may be the same person, Tajoom Uk'ab Tuun, who came from or was affiliated with Teotihuacan.

However, Panel 2 is neither a copy nor a restatement of Panel 12, for although their similarities are significant, their primary difference is striking (fig. 4.9). Panel 2's kneeling figures are in a position of deference before the Piedras Negras ruler, but they are warriors who are dressed and armed (Schele and Mathews 1991:231). In stark contrast, the hands of the men kneeling in the Panel 12 image are bound with ropes: they are captives, as is Yaxchilán's ruler, Knot-eye Jaguar I. Regardless of whether he was sacrificed, the image of the bound ruler would have been a striking and disturbing sight for those from Yaxchilán.



Figure 4.6. Kneeling captive with glyphic caption naming Knot-eye Jaguar of Yaxchilán, detail of Piedras Negras Panel 12. Drawing by Nikolai Grube. Courtesy of Nikolai Grube.

Figure 4.7. Piedras Negras
Panel 12, limestone, ca. 518
CE. Photograph by Linton
Satterthwaite, 1932, before
restoration, after reuniting
the two fragments but before
removal of stucco layer.
Courtesy of the Penn Museum,
Image #16204.

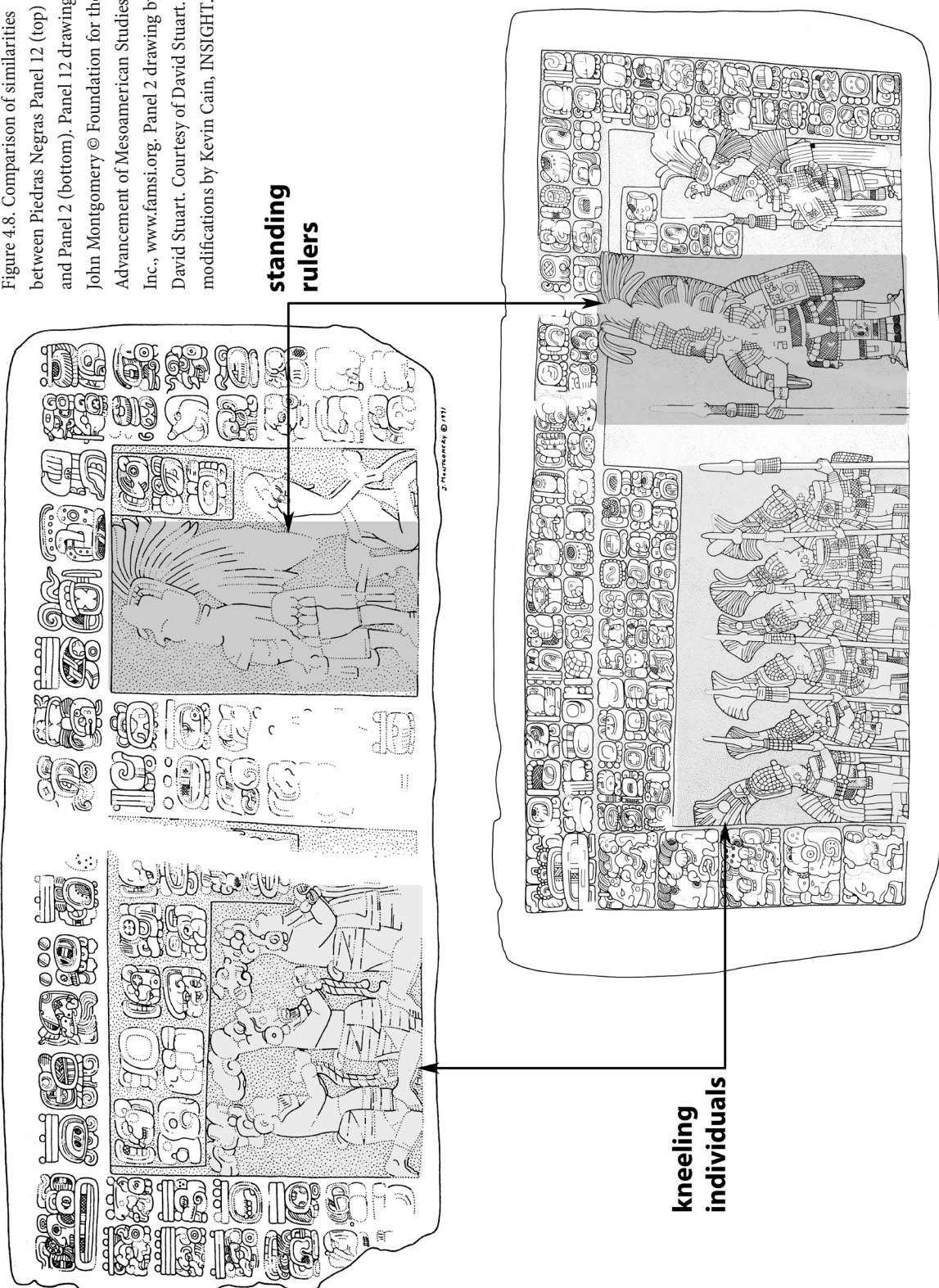


Panels 2 and 12 may once have been displayed at the same time. They are not necessarily contradictory. Although they treat events from roughly the same time, Panel 2's retrospective image emphasizes an alternate event and different people: Yat Ahk I in 510 as opposed to Panel 12's Ruler C between 514 and 518. However, the two stories are related, for before Knot-eye Jaguar I was captured, he had defeated Yat Ahk I (Martin and Grube 2008:141). This defeat took place in between the events highlighted on the two panels—after Yat Ahk I's ko'haw helmet ceremony (Panel 2) and before Ruler C's capture of Knot-eye Jaguar I (Panel 12).

Panel 2 thus retrospectively presents an image of the ancestor Yat Ahk I not marred by his defeat at the hands of Knot-eye Jaguar; but neither does it refer to the Piedras Negras victory over Knot-eye Jaguar. With the seventh-century creation of Panel 2, then, Itzam K'an Ahk I's sculptors selected for analogy and depiction a moment of alliance over moments of antagonism between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán. Through retrospective imaging, the picture of the early sixth century was transformed, and the new portrayal of this time suppressed or sidestepped the antagonism that the display of captives—especially the bound ruler—engendered.

This transformation amounts not to a rewriting of history but a reframing, for in selecting one event over another for emphasis and analogy, they reshaped the image of the past (see O'Neil 2010). This took place both in the seventh and eighth centuries, albeit in different ways. The seventh-century reframing of history transpired by means of pictorial narration, with the retrospective depiction of the early sixth-century war-helmet scene on Panel 2. In contrast, another reframing took place in the eighth century through the relocation of objects, when Panel 2's scene of alliance

Figure 4.8. Comparison of similarities between Piedras Negras Panel 12 (top) and Panel 2 (bottom). Panel 12 drawing by John Montgomery © Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org. Panel 2 drawing by David Stuart. Courtesy of David Stuart. With modifications by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT.



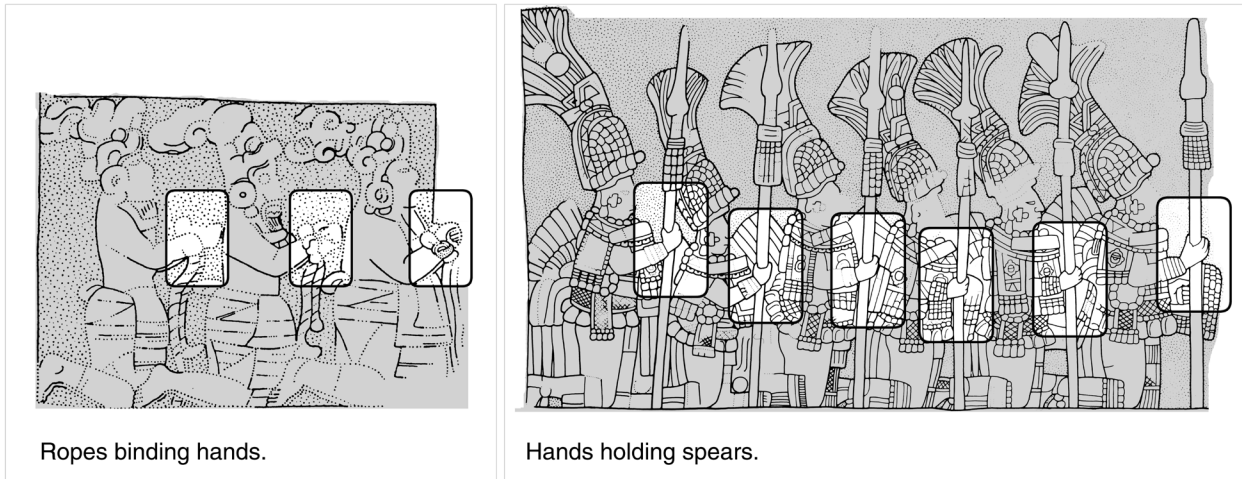


Figure 4.9. Comparison of major differences between details of Piedras Negras Panel 12 (left) and Panel 2 (right). Panel 12 drawing by John Montgomery © Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org. Panel 2 drawing by David Stuart. Courtesy of David Stuart. With modifications by Kevin Cain, INSIGHT.

was reset and displayed and Panel 12's scene of captive humiliation was buried. Both instances of the highlighting of alliance over antagonism may have been motivated by diplomatic relations between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán.

We cannot know for sure whether Panels 12 and 2 ever were displayed together, though what is ultimately important is that both were reused in Structure O-13 in the eighth century. In essence, they were juxtaposed; Panel 2 was displayed and visible, and Panel 12 was buried and invisible, but both remained present and proximate. But why did the Maya do this? By the time the last phase of O-13 was constructed, Panel 12 already was eroded and may have been broken, and one motivation for its burial may have been to put the sculpture to rest. Why, then, did the Maya move Panel 12 to O-13 for burial in the temple's shrine? Why not save the work and leave it where it had been?

It may have been desirable to keep Panels 2 and 12 in close proximity because their meaning and materiality had become intertwined, and the act of displaying Panel 2 and burying Panel 12 in the same building was a tangible acknowledgment of a transformation in the visible historical narrative (see O'Neil 2010). The presence of buried fragments in proximity to a displayed whole panel suggests that Panel 12 was an essential part of Panel 2's life history. Whereas the Panel 2 image of alliance was emphasized through its display, the Panel 12 image of hostility was suppressed by its burial. Even so, the two objects were linked. Thus they were kept in close proximity, with Panel 12's reminder of Piedras Negras' erstwhile victory physically present but suppressed.

The burial of Panel 12 in the O-13 shrine may also have been motivated by a need to dispose of the broken panel properly, for regardless of what it narrates, a physical object of the past may retain value and demand special treatment. Examples of what may be considered comparable treatment of sculptures are seen at Tikal and Copán, particularly in the burial of the Tikal Ballcourt Marker and Copán Stela 49. The Tikal

Ballcourt Marker was cached in an altar in Group 6C-XVI, an Early Classic complex south of the Mundo Perdido (fig. 4.10). It had a Teotihuacan sculptural form and a text recounting the arrival of Teotihuacan personages in Tikal in the late fourth century. Other buried Tikal sculptures, such as Stela 26, had been broken, probably in warfare, and were likely buried because they were broken. In contrast, the Ballcourt Marker had no signs of breakage. It was pristine when buried, and it was cached with a stucco head and a *Spondylus* shell in an altar buried in the complex's North Plaza (Fialko 1988:121–22; Laporte and Fialko 1990:48, fig. 3.15; 1995:65–66, 71; Stuart 2000:481–90). It may have been buried because it was obsolete and its message no longer valued within the changing politics of the Tikal polity in relation to Teotihuacan. But even if its message was considered obsolete, the object was treated with reverence, indicating it was perceived to be sacred or powerful and required a special burial (O'Neil 2009:130–31).

Another comparison is Copán Stela 49, which was buried in Structure 10L-4-3rd, the first phase of what would become the large radial pyramid in the Main Plaza (fig. 4.11). Like other Maya buildings, Structure 10L-4-3rd's construction was accompanied by ceremonial activities, including the burial of four or more offering caches, some within a layer of burned organic material that was three meters long and four centimeters deep, the result of substantial dedicatory fires (Cheek and Milla 1983:55).

These caches and burning ceremonies undoubtedly served to sanctify the building, and several broken sculptures were buried in it, probably as part of the dedicatory activities. Stela 49—in two fragments—was cached in the center of a wall or step of the 10L-4-3rd shrine (Cheek and Milla 1983:82–83). The two fragments were the lower part (perhaps two-thirds) of the stela, and its front and back have inscriptions. Stuart (personal communication, 2008) has identified Copán Ruler 6's name in the text, and it may be a monument of Ruler 6 or his successor, Bahlam Nehn. Yet, in addition to the clean break of the whole monument, there is evidence for deliberate erasure of the text, for a glyph block was chipped away, its content cleanly and deliberately removed, perhaps for historical revision or censorship. Stela 49's burial in the shrine and the accompanying evidence for offerings to and intense ritual treatment of this



Figure 4.10. Tikal Ballcourt Marker. Photograph by author. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala.



Figure 4.11. Copán Stela 49. Photograph by author. Museo Regional de Arqueología Maya, Copán Ruinas, Honduras. Courtesy of the Instituto Hondureño de Antropología e Historia.

building nevertheless indicate that Stela 49's caching was religiously motivated. Even if it was buried because it was obsolete or needed to be hidden for historical revision, it functioned as an offering to the building. Likewise, the motivation for Panel 12's burial may have been not only to suppress the object and its message but also to treat the stone with reverence.

O-13 Caches: Structure and Ceremony

The importance of objects buried in Structure O-13 comes into further focus through a closer examination of caches buried in the building, and they, in turn, shed more light on the reuse of Panel 12. The cached materials were deposited as offerings to the building and associated ancestors. As with other Classic Maya caches, they were located in significant places on the pyramid and in the shrine, particularly on the building's central axis and beneath the shrine's doorways, piers, and walls. In fact, their placement follows the structures of the building, its center, and its entrances. The presence, quantity, and placement of the caches, added to evidence that burning occurred in the shrine, indicate that this shrine was a highly charged ceremonial space. In addition, Miscellaneous Sculptured Stone 1 (MSS 1), a broken altar with a text commemorating K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's death, was cached in the O-13 shrine. The evidence suggests that the act of caching objects in the shrine functioned in multiple ways, including the shaping of historical discourse, ancestor veneration, and the sanctification of the structure.

There is ample evidence that Structure O-13 was a place of frequent and intense ceremonial activity, for the University of Pennsylvania project found numerous caches buried in the building and fire-blackening on all phases of the temple floors. William Coe (1959:79) identified fifty-six caches. The Piedras Negras Archaeological Project found one more, for a total of fifty-seven, not counting Burial 13, Itzam K'an Ahk II's tomb (Escobedo 2004:278; Escobedo and Alvarado 1998:8; Hruby 1998:376–79). The caches contained a variety of items including flint and obsidian eccentrics, blades, and flakes; shells, stingray spines, jadeite, and other materials. Most were inside ceramic vessels, and their contents were

similar to other caches at the site (W. Coe 1959:81–88). Coe (1959:80) noted the “unprecedented cache deposition beneath the floors of the temple” and connected this to the “rapid erection of monuments,” although only three caches were beneath monuments; the rest were associated with parts of the building. Unfortunately, neither the excavations nor the excavation records were very careful, and there is little information regarding details of placement or stratigraphy for many caches (W. Coe 1959:80). Nevertheless, Mason’s field notes and Coe’s analyses of the notes and artifacts contain information useful in reconstructing their basic forms and placements.

The caches were in various positions throughout the pyramid, though most were on its central axis. Three were at the pyramid’s base (in association with monumental sculptures), others were at the top of the stairway, and the majority were in and around the temple’s superstructure. The superstructure caches were buried under the shrine’s doorways, the east pier, the rear wall, and the floors of the shrine’s rooms. Some were in the front gallery and middle rooms, though the highest concentration and diversity of offerings were in the rear room; these were deposited before the last floor was sealed (W. Coe 1959:81–88; Mason, n.d.a., 27/42–43).

Located on the pyramid’s central axis, at the structure’s entrances and interstices, and beneath construction elements, the caches sanctified the space, supported construction elements, and marked its ingresses. Their positions are analogous to what Shirley Boteler Mock (1998:6) summarizes as the most common places for ancient dedication and termination caches: “interstices of structures,” including stairways, axial centers, boundaries, doorways, and corners, which she characterizes as “liminal sites, places of transition, where contact with the Otherworld, and thus with power, was strongest.”

Structure O-13’s largest cache, found on the pyramid’s central axis, was O-13-57 (Escobedo and Alvarado 1998:7–8; Escobedo and Houston 1998:411–12; Hruby 1998:376–78). But the preponderance of cache deposition was in the O-13 shrine on the temple’s summit, where the University of Pennsylvania project uncovered numerous offerings beneath the rear room’s floor alone; they divided these into thirty-one caches numbered O-13-23 to O-13-53, although this separation was somewhat arbitrary (W. Coe 1959:82–90). Mason’s field notes describe the highest concentration of offerings as being under the rear room’s floor, and he observed that the materials and soil under this floor were mixed with charcoal and soot and that the objects were calcined. The soot and calcination indicate they had been burned, and the burning was most intense in the rear room, the primary location for offering (Mason, n.d.a., 27/38, 27/42–43). There also was evidence of burning on the latest shrine floor. This burning again was concentrated in the rear room, indicating that it was a focused ceremonial activity and not a full torching of the building. In addition, burning on the floors of earlier phases indicates a lengthy span of ceremonial practice in this shrine, both during K’inich Yat Ahk II’s reign and before, probably during the reigns of Yo’nal Ahk III and Ha’ K’in Xook.

The caches on the pyramid’s central axis and around the shrine would have sanctified and activated the building at the time of its construction and dedication. Rosemary Joyce (1992:499–501) highlights the presence of bloodletting instruments—such as stingray spines; obsidian flakes, blades, and blade fragments; and a shark tooth—in the building’s caches. She argues that the buried caches and

bloodletting implements form a ceremonial pathway up the pyramid stairs that culminates in the shrine's interior, and she suggests that "the ritual act of bloodletting implied by its instruments was the means of actively inaugurating movement through the sacred space of the temple." Furthermore, because of the high concentration of caches in the rear room, she refers to this innermost room as the "peak of activity" and designates the MSS 1 altar "the focus of cache activity in this room" (R. Joyce 1992:499).

The 1997 and 1998 discoveries of Burial 13 and the rich O-13-57 cache at the pyramid's base allow us to expand Joyce's model. Their presence indicates that it was not only the shrine at the summit but also the base of the pyramid that served as anchors for this ceremonial pathway, and one or the other would have been the starting point and destination for processions along the pyramid's central axis.

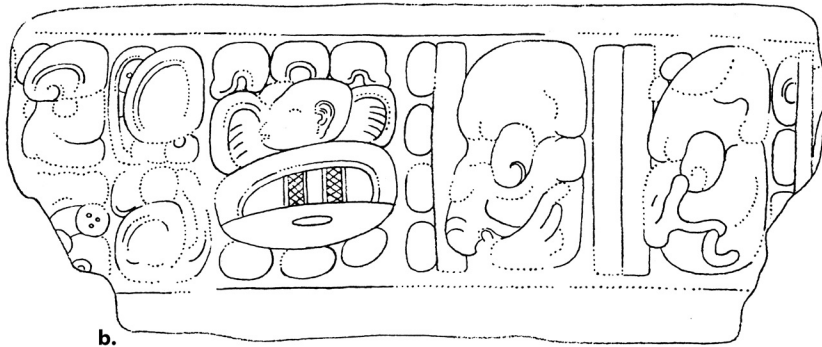
These caches, which held the material remains of ceremonies, made the O-13 ceremonial pathway material and permanent. But the memory of their presence and the indices of other ceremonial practices also may have functioned didactically by guiding ritual participants to ascend the stairway and enter the shrine to perform similar offerings. In fact, the archaeological record shows that after these interments, people did move up the stairs to perform ceremonies. Burial 13, at the base of the stairs, was reentered and burned (Escobedo 2004:278), and the floors and walls of the shrine at the pyramid's summit were blackened with soot from fire ceremonies (Mason, n.d.a., 27/37; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:23). These are clear indices of humans activating the pathway up the pyramid with both movement and fire.

Yet, as noted earlier, Structure O-13 was not the first at Piedras Negras with a ceremonial pathway up the building, for the configurations of Structures R-9, R-5, and K-5 indicate that they, too, had ceremonial pathways that were both materialized in buried caches and visible altars and activated through continued ceremonial performance. Moreover, the caches buried in these buildings contained the same selection of materials as in Structure O-13, which suggests that both the contents and their placement followed a pattern. Indeed, Coe observed that for structural caches, "the pattern is obviously early and persistent" and that "votive deposits, once instituted in a typical form, tended to retain that form. Items seen in early offerings were maintained; what seems to be change is really addition" (W. Coe 1959:104–106).

The conservatism of cache content and placement and the ongoing creation and use of ceremonial pathways ascending multiple rulers' temples are analogous to the continuities in monumental sculpture at Piedras Negras, particularly in the repetition and emulation of stela, altar, and panel forms, imagery, and placement, described in chapter 3. Continuing the tradition of cache dedications and ceremonial rites was thus an additional way that Late Classic Piedras Negras rulers established and maintained links with their ancestors. Contrasting with connections displayed through monumental stone sculptures, however, the caching rites were ephemeral performances, and the cached items, when buried, were rendered invisible. Yet the inter-generational continuities are still analogous, for the similarities in both cases resulted from the performance of dedication ceremonies according to tradition. The significance of the continuities, therefore, both for the displayed sculptures and the cached items, lay not merely in the displayed products but in the acts of dedicating them during rites performed in the tradition of their ancestors. Through these practices, rulers both displayed and experienced connections with their ancestors.



a.



b.

Figure 4.12. Piedras Negras
Miscellaneous Sculptured Stone 1,
limestone, ca. 639 CE.

a. Photograph by author. Courtesy of
the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de
Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de
Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala.
b. Roll-out drawing by John
Montgomery © Foundation for the
Advancement of Mesoamerican
Studies, Inc., www.famsi.org.



Figure 4.13. Artifacts recovered from excavations in and in front of Piedras Negras Structures J-3
and J-4. At top right is the portable altar that was cached with Stela 8. Courtesy of the Penn Museum,
Image #20232.

Commemorating the Dynasty: Caching Miscellaneous Sculptured Stone 1

Among the cached items interred in the floor of the temple's innermost rear room was Miscellaneous Sculptured Stone 1 (MSS 1), a portable stone altar measuring 13 centimeters high and 25 centimeters in diameter (fig. 4.12). The altar was broken, and only half of it was buried in the shrine's floor. It was found slightly off the building's central axis and near the rear wall (W. Coe 1959:86; Morley 1937–38, 3:108). This was the place with the most caches and the highest concentration of burning, both during caching rites and later use. Unfortunately, the excavation notes are unclear as to the altar's specific archaeological context, for the excavations were done quickly. Morley, following Mason's suggestion, published MSS 1's context as being below the floor, and Coe assigned it a cache number (O-13-34).⁹

The MSS 1 altar shares similarities with other small cylindrical stone altars that were cached with stelae, placed on central axes in rear rooms, or buried on central axes at Piedras Negras. A comparison with these altars may be useful here. Satterthwaite divided these altars, of various sizes and shapes, into portable altars, drum-shaped stones, and column altars, but all were made for intimate offerings. Small altars (Satterthwaite's drum-shaped stones) without tenons and similar to MSS 1 in size were cached in the cists of three stelae—Stelae 8, 9, and 11—during the reigns of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II and Itzam K'an Ahk II (W. Coe 1959:38; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:25; [1936] 2005c:150) (figs. 4.13, 4.14).

The column altars were taller and had tenons that were planted in floors. Structure R-9's Column Altar 4, for example, measured 48 centimeters in height, with 30 centimeters exposed above the floor into which it was planted (Satterthwaite [1944] 2005e:202). Many were installed on pyramids' central axes; they could be set in the plazas in front of a pyramid, on a terrace, in front of the shrine's central door, or in a niche at the back of the shrine. On Structure R-9, for example, a line of altars was installed along the central axis and culminated in the shrine (Satterthwaite [1944] 2005e:189, 193, 195). On Structure K-5, altars from three building phases were placed on the central axis of three successive shrines. When each building phase was buried during the construction of the next phase, the altars were buried—along with their respective buildings—in the locations where they had been used (W. Coe 1959:93–94; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:24) (fig. 4.15).

It is clear these column altars were used in ceremonies, for there is evidence of localized burning on and around them. The altars in Structure K-5 were blackened, as were the floors around them (W. Coe 1959:93–94; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:24).¹⁰ Mason notes that the K-5-2 altar was blackened and calcined mostly in the front, “indicating that fires, doubtless of a ceremonial nature, had been built at the front.” The K-5-3 altar was blackened on all sides, and the floor around it was blackened as well; for this reason Mason suggests fires were built around it (Mason, n.d.b., 27, 42, 48). In addition, the niche of the K-5-1 altar contained ashy fill from fires and broken ceramic sherds of good-quality thin black ware (Mason, n.d.b., 10–12a). These were the remains of ceremonies performed in this shrine.

These column altars were used to make and receive offerings. Houston (personal communication, 2005) hypothesizes that column altars were used for offerings to ancestors because of their association with funerary pyramids, but they are present



Figure 4.14. Piedras Negras Stela 9, with cached cylindrical stone altar visible after excavation, in situ. Altar is at lower right, next to the stela base. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Image #15774.

on other buildings and may have been used in other kinds of offerings as well.¹¹ The lighting of fires on and around the altars constitutes another kind of engagement with carved stones at Piedras Negras. In the case of these column altars, their importance lay in the practice of offering and ceremonial performance. Subsequently, they may have been valued even more because they had been used for ceremonies and offerings. As visible objects, they were tangible loci of connections to the divine; when buried, they may have continued to perform the offerings that were materialized in the altars' burned and broken physical states.

MSS 1 is similar to the column altars because of its cylindrical shape and relatively small diameter. But it differs from them in several ways, including its shorter height

Figure 4.15. Column altar
in niche, from Piedras
Negras. Photograph ca.
1935, courtesy of the Penn
Museum, Image #175887.



and lack of a tenon for planting in the ground. MSS 1 also has a text carved around its periphery (fig. 4.12). This fragmentary text records a Long Count date beginning with 9.10.6 that has been reconstructed to 9.10.6.2.1 (3 February 639 CE), K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's death date (Fitzsimmons 1998:271–72; Thompson 1944:81).¹² Itzam K'an Ahk I probably commissioned this altar in commemoration of his father's death, and the altar undoubtedly was a locus for offerings to K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I. Its text once would have wrapped around the small altar in a counterclockwise circle, comparable to most monumental stelae and altars at Piedras Negras.

When first created, MSS 1 may have been placed on a pyramid's central axis in a location analogous to those of the column altars in Structures R-9 or K-5. It would not have been set into a floor, though it could have been placed on a floor, bench, or niche. In fact, I hypothesize it was used in the shrine of Structure R-5 for offering to K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I.

Itzam K'an Ahk I also commemorated his father's death on Panel 4, with a text recounting events in K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's life, his death, and a fire ceremony Itzam K'an Ahk I performed in his father's tomb in 658 CE, nearly a k'atun after his death (see fig. 3.5). As mentioned above, Panel 4 was placed on Structure R-5, the probable location of his father's tomb (Houston, Escobedo, Terry, et al. 2000:10). If MSS 1 was used on Structure R-5, it is plausible that the censuring rite narrated on Panel 4 took place not only in K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's tomb but also on this altar.

Regardless of where it was before, the MSS 1 altar's final deposition was in the floor of the O-13 shrine amid an array of other cached items (W. Coe 1959:80–86; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:23). Because it was dedicated to K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's memory, the motivation for caching MSS 1 may have related to his veneration. If so, the MSS 1 altar's transfer to and deposition in the O-13 shrine created and maintained physical and spiritual links with K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, one of the polity's early dynasts. This was congruent with other connections made to the polity's past on Structure O-13, including the stela forms and orientations, the panels' narrations, and the reuse of older sculptures.

The link to the past embodied in MSS 1 and its burial also worked in tandem with Panel 2, a visible sculpture installed on Structure O-13. The panel implicitly evoked K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, for the seventh-century ko'haw helmet ceremony it narrated took place one k'atun after his death. Panel 2's implicit—yet displayed—commemoration of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's death and MSS 1's explicit—yet buried—commemoration of his death suggest that Structure O-13 was dedicated not only to Itzam K'an Ahk II and his funerary pyramid but also to K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I. Structure O-13 thus was a place for commemoration of the longer history of the polity, both as narrated on its sculptures and as embodied in materials incorporated into the structure.

It was at the center of the shrine's innermost room, a highly sacred location at one end of the ritual pathway that R. Joyce (1992) demarcated, where the eighth-century Maya buried the MSS 1 altar more than a century after it was made. The ceremonial pathway would have reached from Itzam K'an Ahk II's tomb at the base of the O-13 pyramid to the shrine at its summit, where various ancestors, including Yat Ahk I, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, Itzam K'an Ahk I, and Itzam K'an Ahk II were present through sculptures associated with them. Yo'nal Ahk III and Ha' K'in Xook were present as well, for their stelae remained on the pyramid.

In its final location, MSS 1 also was an offering to the temple, akin to other foundational or dedicatory caches (see Mock 1998:10). Indeed, burying the MSS 1 altar at the center of Structure O-13 may have been part of building foundation rituals. The Classic period Maya of other polities also buried sculptures on the central axes of temples. These include Tikal Stelae 26 and 31, Pomoná Stela 7, and Uaxactún Stela 26, among others (W. Coe 1990:475, 498; Coggins 1976:188; García Moll 2005:57, 127–28, 145; O’Neil 2009:125–28; 2005, chap. 5; Smith 1950:23–25, 86). These interred monuments appear to have seeded the new structures built over them.

Like the burial of MSS 1, Panel 12’s burial also may have been an offering to the building, for at least half was reused in one of the corner jambs, perhaps as a literal and symbolic support for the building and the sacred space it framed—or, as Miller (1991:10) has suggested, a metaphorical cornerstone or support. Also, centers and corners were principal loci of offerings made to dedicate houses in twentieth-century Zinacantán (Vogt 1998:21–25). Moreover, the fact that these buried sculptures came from the dynasty’s ancestors likely made them into even more powerful objects for caching and offering. The potency of the MSS 1 altar in the foundation may have been especially intense, both because of its connections to K’inich Yo’nal Ahk I and Itzam K’an Ahk I—sacred ancestors by the time O-13 was built—and because of the potency the altar had accrued from ceremonies performed there.

Although I have argued in this book that visibility was an important aspect of the creation and experience of Piedras Negras sculptures, things that were not visible could still have salient presence and agency, whether through their interactions with other sculptures, when one sculpture was privileged and another was suppressed as part of reshaping a historical narrative, or in situations in which sculptures were perceived to perform through their materiality and outside of human agency and perception. Indeed, although the Piedras Negras Maya engaged with what was carved on stone sculptures, these carvings were only one aspect of their relevance. Ceremonial interaction also was fundamental. The effect of modifications imparted to the objects through ceremony may have allowed their power to endure beyond the ephemeral rite, and the ceremonies were made permanent through the materiality of their residue.

In contrast to the complex visible text and imagery on Panels 2 and 3, then, are the invisible yet present and palpable carved stones—Panel 12 and MSS 1—buried in the O-13 shrine, their presence providing different kinds of contact with the past. The broken sculptures interred in Structure O-13 continued to have material and conceptual meaning and relevance beyond their breakage and interment and were part of the physical and conceptual makeup of the building and of memory—and remembrances—of ancestors, events, buildings, and sculptures.

Forms of Engaging Sculptures on Structure O-13

As explored in this chapter and the two previous chapters, Structure O-13 was the site of multiple kinds of interaction with stone sculptures. Individual sculptures inspired particular types of viewing and bodily experience. Like other Piedras Negras stelae, the images on the Structure O-13 stelae provided opportunities for people to engage with the individuals depicted on and embodied by them. People also may have

experienced stelae on O-13 through counterclockwise movement around them to follow their textual narration; this movement emulated world creation and renewal and made the act of dedicating or viewing a sculpture a kinetic, sacred experience.

The O-13 sculptures also inspired ascent of pyramids. For example, as described in chapter 2, the act of viewing the vertically layered image on Stela 12, which corresponded to the rising levels of the pyramid on which it stood, may have inspired movement up and down that pyramid's stairway (see figs. 1.1, 2.16–17, 4.1). This movement correlates with evidence for ceremonies and processions performed up the building's stairway, both during its dedication and over time, as seen in the caches buried in the building and the evidence for extensive burning in Itzam K'an Ahk II's tomb and the O-13 temple shrine (Escobedo 2004:278; Mason, n.d.b., 27/37; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:23).

These ceremonies and processions, performed for sanctification and ancestor veneration, were kinetic and sacred acts. They could have been conducted in tandem with processions of other shapes and scales, such as circumambulation around individual monuments or processions between sculptures on the building and across the site's processional causeways. The array of diverse but complementary types of processions at O-13 is analogous to that hypothesized for other parts of the site, including the cross-plaza and circular processions in the South Group and the vertical processions up pyramids in the South and West Groups.

In addition, as discussed in chapter 3, the Structure O-13 stelae encouraged engagement with stelae from earlier rulers' reigns elsewhere at the site through both visual emulation and physical orientation. Viewers and performers could have activated these symbolic associations as they proceeded between and among the site's architectural and sculptural complexes and commemorated ancestors, generated new historical dialogue, and transformed the causeways into sites of historical discourse and remembrance. The repetition of forms across stelae created parallels among the rulers shown on them. Whether the dynasts were biologically related or had usurped the throne, whether they were powerful warriors or had fallen in humiliating defeat, their repetition in stone displayed an overall image of natural death and rebirth, of continuity and cyclicity of rulership.

The reuse and relocation of older sculptures complemented or reinforced previously existing processional pathways that linked ancestors' sculptural embodiments and funerary pyramids to one another. Sculptures and buildings of at least two early rulers (K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I and Itzam K'an Ahk I) remained visible in the South Group. The installation of Panel 2 and MSS 1 in Structure O-13, which recalled K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, Itzam K'an Ahk I, and Yat Ahk I, created another link between Structure O-13 and the South Group.

The Piedras Negras Maya treated these objects as representatives or relics from the past and used them to make contact with the past. This is comparable to what I have argued for Early Classic lintels that were reset in eighth-century buildings at Yaxchilán (O'Neil 2011). Yet on Piedras Negras Structure O-13, the movement and placement of older sculptures in the building also reframed aspects of the dynasty's history and its relations with other polities in the region.

In some ways, the O-13 sculptural program centers on K'inich Yat Ahk II, for the trajectory of history leads to him, and he is the one to perform a burning ceremony at Itzam K'an Ahk II's burial mound. At the same time, the O-13 sculptural program

moves back and forth across time, creating relationships among different rulers, and the building is a place in which history is made visible and tangible through new sculptural creation and contextualization. K'inich Yat Ahk II, for instance, made connections with Itzam K'an Ahk II through the narrative inscribed on Panel 3; he also erected his stelae on his predecessor's funerary pyramid and censed his tomb. Yet he connected himself with Yo'nal Ahk III and Ha' K'in Xook, as well, by erecting his stelae in proximity to theirs. With the reuse of Panel 2 and MSS 1, he made further material links with Yat Ahk I, K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, and Itzam K'an Ahk I. The building thus evokes a more extensive span of the polity's history than any other building at the site.

The evocation of multiple temporal cycles and various rulers' reigns on this building may be compared to the text on K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Altar 1 (692 CE), which presented the polity's history in a lengthy series of parallel or nested cycles, both historical and mythological, beginning thousands of years in the past (figs. 1.7, 2.22). As argued in chapter 3, Altar 1's placement in the West Group Plaza could have functioned in late seventh- and eighth-century processions across the site that connected stelae from various temporal cycles, the altar functioning as a performative nexus in the larger processional circuit (see figs. 3.19, 3.23).

Structure O-13 may have had a similar role and functioned as a locale where multiple temporal cycles, historical figures, and events were recalled. These were brought together in a manner not unlike a textual narration juxtaposing personages, events, and memories, albeit here enacted through the material realm. Yet the power of this place was far more palpable than a narration because its physical makeup resulted from the collection of indices and materializations of those events, and the very place was saturated with memory.

Structure O-13 was positioned in the landscape at the nexus of pathways in which historical discourse had been activated, performed, and transformed for more than a century, as each ruler reshaped the historical narrative leading up to his reign. Over the preceding generations, the performance of memory would have been modified to lead to the ever-changing present, and O-13 may have become a place of memory precisely because it was located at the intersection of the processional routes through which historical dialogues and ancestral commemoration had been performed, mapped onto, and integrated into the landscape. If this model is correct, then the formal structures of processions influenced the development of what would become the most actively used shrine in the site center in the second half of the eighth century.

Sculptural Destruction

As discussed earlier in this chapter, Panel 3 portrayed a scene of alliance between Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán. But if there was an alliance, it did not last, and Panel 3 itself would be transformed, most likely the result of another turn in the two polities' history of alliance and conflict. Less than thirty years after it was made, Panel 3 was attacked. The head of every human figure carved on the monument was broken off, along with some parts of their bodies (see fig. 1.2). Also destroyed were K'inich Yat Ahk II's Throne 1 and his Stelae 15 and 12.

This damage happened most likely in the early ninth century. Stuart (1998b) and Houston (2004:276) have hypothesized that Yaxchilán warriors inflicted this destruction during the battle in which they seized K'inich Yat Ahk II in 808 CE, a capture recorded on Yaxchilán Lintel 10. If this hypothesis is correct, the capture and destruction constituted yet another episode in the long-term history between these two sites. Lintel 10's narration of K'inich Yat Ahk II's capture is the last record of conflict between the polities, and it is Yaxchilán's last inscription as well; both cities soon were abandoned (Houston 2004:276; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2003:228, 238–39).

These sculptures were not a simple casualty of other violence; their destruction was directed and intentional. The sculptures were located in hard-to-reach places. One was K'inich Yat Ahk II's throne room in the Acropolis, amid a maze of buildings; another was the top of Structure O-13, where K'inich Yat Ahk II had installed sculptures and performed ceremonies. With K'inich Yat Ahk II's capture and the destruction of his monuments, the marauders attempted to remove both the man and his memory from Piedras Negras. Nonetheless, they attacked sculptures of other rulers as well, including Panel 7 from Structure K-5, and they burned buildings, including Structure J-12 in Court 2 in the Acropolis (Houston and Escobedo 2001:625), probably because they were also symbols of the polity's identity and power.

An analogous situation occurred at Yaxchilán, for many sculptures of Itzamnaaj Bahlam IV, who reigned from circa 769 to at least 800 CE (Martin and Grube 2008:134), contemporary with K'inich Yat Ahk II, were destroyed. The carnage appears to have been violent and deliberate, perhaps as part of a program to destroy the ruler's image at the site (M. Miller and O'Neil 2004). Yaxchilán Stelae 4 and 7, of Itzamnaaj Bahlam IV, were smashed where they stood in front of Structure 20; in both cases the ruler's face was destroyed, as if specifically targeted. In addition, his Stelae 21, 22, and 29, which stood in front of Structure 44, were also destroyed. Finally, his Stela 24 was broken and reused in the masonry of Structure 64, a late building (Tate 1992:264). Some stelae of previous rulers were smashed as well, though they may have been collateral damage, for most were located next to Itzamnaaj Bahlam IV's damaged stelae in front of Structures 20 and 44. Alternatively, the Structure 44 stelae may have been destroyed because they were in the Pequeña Acrópolis, the site of a late battle (Kaneke 1998).

Because of the history of conflict between Yaxchilán and Piedras Negras, the evidence for roughly contemporaneous destruction at both sites, and the glyphic record of the capture of K'inich Yat Ahk II, Piedras Negras is a good candidate for the aggressor in the battle at Yaxchilán (M. Miller and O'Neil 2004). And although there was damage inflicted on other sculptures and buildings at Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán, the evidence surrounding the sculptural destruction suggests the violence at both sites was directed primarily at the sculptures of K'inich Yat Ahk II and Itzamnaaj Bahlam IV, the rulers reigning then at each site, and the intention of the destruction was to extinguish those kings' images. These are only a few of the many examples of ancient Maya sculptural destruction. The Piedras Negras and Yaxchilán sculptures were destroyed at the end of the sites' major occupations and were never cleaned up, though in other times and places, the Maya retrieved destroyed sculptures and buried them in buildings. Examples are from Pomoná (García Moll 2005:128), Copán (Fash 1998; Sharer 2004:305–16), and Tikal (W. Coe

1990:479–87, 505; Jones 1991; O’Neil 2009; Shook 1958). As Sharer (2004:305–16) has argued for Copán, and Martin (2000b) for Tikal, much of the destruction appears to have taken place amid warfare. Destruction is thus another significant way that the Classic Maya engaged with stone sculptures, and the targeted destructions are testaments to their potency as animate objects or symbols of power that enemies tried to deactivate.

Conclusion

The Classic period Maya at Piedras Negras shaped memory through narrations, materials, and performances on Structure O-13. On this building, they both commemorated ancestors and transformed historical narratives. This was the burial place of Itzam K’an Ahk II, and it was also a place for the installation of several rulers’ monuments, some of which bear explicit narrations about the past and commemorate earlier events and people. The actions performed on the building and the people who used the building became an inherent part of the place, and the building became a place of memory.

The life histories of this building and its stone monuments reveal changes in use and meaning of the structure and its monuments over time, but the monuments maintained links to those who created them, those portrayed on them, and those who used them. The surviving evidence of how the sculptures were treated allows inferences about how the Classic period Maya may have perceived them. For instance, some monuments were handled in particular ways because of connections to specific ancestors or their expression of certain historical narratives. Others appear to have been valued not for associations with ancestors but because of their increased potency after use in ceremonial rites. These examples point to the potential for the accrual and inherence of memory in materials for the Late Classic Maya at Piedras Negras.

Close examination of Structure O-13 also sheds light on the use of Piedras Negras sculptures and buildings in performance and ceremony. Following the arguments of chapters 2 and 3, models for movement around the sculptures and up the building have been proposed. In addition, there is ample archaeological evidence for the realization of ceremonial rites such as caching and burning on Structure O-13, some of which correlates with and strengthens the proposed models of people engaging with the sculptures.

Finally, the targeted smashing of monuments on Structure O-13 and other buildings at Piedras Negras indicates that these images and objects were considered powerful not only by the people who revered the rulers and ancestors but also by enemies who were intent on destroying the ruler, the polity, and their symbols and embodiments. Indeed, both the preservation and destruction of these monuments make clear the significance of these carved stones to the Classic period Maya at Piedras Negras and elsewhere.

Conclusion

Most of the sculptures of Piedras Negras are no longer in the places where the Yokib rulers of the seventh and eighth centuries installed them. Yet in their original contexts—both at Piedras Negras and other Maya sites—these sculptures impelled human interaction. The Classic period Maya referred to the sculptures as *k'uhul* (holy), and it is abundantly clear that they invested them with profound potency. The forms, sizes, images, texts, and physical contexts of Maya sculptures worked in multiple ways to engage people and their bodies, obliging them to move closer or farther away, urging them to circle monuments or travel back and forth between one and another, or inspiring them to make offerings. Viewing the sculptures involved the entire body in optic, haptic, and kinetic experiences.

Both the creation and reception of Maya sculptures were corporeal experiences involving multiple senses. With some stelae weighing as much as six tons, tremendous physical strength and technological aids were required to quarry, transport, erect, and carve them. Dedications of sculptures on period endings also would have engaged the bodies of ritual participants, who unwrapped the monuments, moved around them, scattered copal, let blood, lit fires, chanted, sang, and danced. The sights, sounds, smells, and heat of the dedication rites would have stimulated the bodies and senses of performers and witnesses.

Whether carved or plain, stelae fundamentally reflected the human body, for their proportions recalled the human form. Furthermore, bodies—especially those of rulers—were the most common subject of stela imagery, and Stuart and Houston argue convincingly that stelae were vital embodiments of the rulers, and that portions of the rulers' souls were perceived to occupy the stones (Stuart 1996; Houston and Stuart 1998). Once planted in platforms or plaza floors, stelae towered over supplicants.

Altars likewise encouraged corporeal engagement. Whereas stelae loom upward, altars open forward and invite people to place offerings on them, as the seated sajal does on El Cayo Altar 4. In contrast to the El Cayo depiction, the tabletops of Piedras Negras monumental altars were at a height more appropriate for making offerings while standing (see figs. I.8, 2.23). Although stelae and altars differed, both types of sculptures at Piedras Negras urged circumambulation. The completion of this processional form was undoubtedly an essential part of the renewal ceremonies during which sculptures were dedicated, ritually activated, and animated.

Moving around these sculptures would allow people to recite texts and see the interactions of the depicted figures and the three-dimensional illusions carved on multiple faces of the stone blocks. Such perception required movement and thus was

dependent on the temporality of that movement. Alex Potts has theorized kinesthetic viewing and the temporality of experience for three-dimensional sculptures in the Western tradition, in which the viewing of a sculpture is “a process unfolding over time” (Potts 2000:8–9). For the Maya at Piedras Negras in the Late Classic period, viewing of stelae and altars most certainly unfolded over time. But this was not simply an effect of their existence as three-dimensional objects. Instead, the temporality of the experience was fundamental to their very essence and their establishment as sacred objects made to commemorate time and renew the world. Indeed, the sculptures invited the movement necessary for their activation during the course of a rite unfolding in time.

In addition, sculptures’ physical contexts in relation to other sculptures and buildings were crucial aspects of their existence and activation. Their placements and associations inspired and required movement, such that the viewing or experience of multiple sculptures together also unfolded over time. Installing monuments in physical orientations created opportunities for dialogue among monuments and consequently among the entities they embodied. These orientations—along with emulation and other visual references—guided people to make connections to other sculptures and create discourse at their intersections. The temporality of these processions and performances also was a fundamental aspect of their meaning and was analogous to the journey through time that both separated and connected successive rulers in the dynasty. Indeed, the dynasts were temporally and physically distinct, but movement, ceremony, and performance—all acts that had to unfold in time—could connect them and their sculptural embodiments.

Architectural contexts also guided interaction with sculptures. Buildings provided dramatic backdrops and sacred references, for many of them were ancestors’ funerary pyramids. Particular placements of sculptures resulted in different visual perspectives according to one’s access to certain spaces. Monuments inhabited and responded to socially and ceremonially charged spaces, their images at times acknowledging and making these conditions explicit. But as animated entities, they also created charged spaces and transformed the space around them.

These monuments changed over time, particularly as they persisted over the centuries while historical, physical, and social contexts changed around them. Made to embody living rulers, they came to embody ancestors and continued to hold potency or some aspect of the vital essence, or *k’uh*, that had been imbued in them. In addition, they triggered memory and functioned as loci for making contact with the past and with sacred ancestors, who were a fundamental part of the present.

But how can we understand the power of these monuments? What does it mean to say that an object has agency or can influence how people perceived or interacted with them? For the ancient Maya and other civilizations (ancient Egypt, ancient Mesopotamia, and medieval India, for example), rites of dedication, establishment, and animation invite divine forces to enter into an object. Once these forces enter objects, people may treat them like persons or divinities and consider them imbued with characteristics of living entities. Consequently, the objects have power over people and guide how they are treated. Regarding this process for Egyptian cult images, Meskell (2004:253–54) writes that “material objects, made by human hands, thus transcend their makers, albeit through human intentionality and artifice.”

The potency of ancient Maya sculptures may have resulted from the perception that they were imbued with a life force that entered them during their activation and remained in them. But their agency may also have derived from their position in a network of social relations. In his relational explanation of the social agency of objects, Alfred Gell (1998:122–23) explains that objects may have agency because they are extensions of the persons who made or used them. The agency of Maya sculptures, then, may have resulted from their connections to particular ancestors, with the objects retaining a link to the person or persons who commissioned them or interacted with them at an earlier time.

Whether because of their animation, their links to ancestors in a network of social relations, or both, the objects became empowered, and in a sense they became more powerful than their creators. Moreover, they influenced the later reception of those sculptures and subsequent creation of new sculptures. The Maya at Piedras Negras left most older monuments standing in significant locations, and they buried others inside Maya buildings, at times as offerings to those buildings. New monuments emulated older ones and were placed in relation to them. The form and placement of the older sculptures thus guided newer sculptural creations and people's behavior in relation to them.

The significance of this emulation and these alignments becomes clearer over time as later sculptures not only continued in this tradition but also responded to the very conditions of emulation and people's experience of sculptural conventions. One telling example is Piedras Negras Stela 14, from circa 761 CE. Its form, imagery, and location acknowledged and responded to Structure O-13's participation in the processional circuit. Stela 14 was installed on the building's lower terrace. In the image on the stela, Yo'nal Ahk III's mother, facing to the right, is positioned as witness in front of the enthroned ruler, situated as if she had just traversed the processional route from the West Group Plaza (see plate 3, figs. 3.23, 3.25, 3.26). Her carved form obscures the details of the adorned scaffold that supports the ruler, but the scaffold is understood to be behind her—out of sight but present. Moreover, the scaffold was visible on stelae from earlier rulers that Stela 14 emulated; those stelae remained standing in the West and South groups and were available for visitation along the causeways.

The perceived potency of older sculptures at Piedras Negras is further demonstrated in the fact that the Maya physically moved and manipulated older sculptures, particularly on Structure O-13, as well as on buildings at other Maya sites.¹ Evidence indicates that the Maya reused sculptures for the purpose of venerating ancestors, shaping historical discourse, and performing memory. It is clear that the Maya considered these older sculptures to be sacred and powerful, yet they also used them to narrate stories, both within objects' texts and images and across objects.

There is also evidence for renewal and recalibration in these histories as new rulers acceded, dedicated sculptures, created new buildings, and transformed the built environment. Each ruler redirected historical narratives to lead to his own present, and it is clear that some rulers used the opportunity to smooth over ruptures and conflicts in the historical narratives and to create displays of apparent continuity.

The physical forms, content, and compositions of Piedras Negras sculptures and buildings from the second half of the eighth century and their relation to processional

causeways and the landscape are indicators of the meaningful practice of the performances associated with them. Moreover, they reveal that for the Late Classic Maya at Piedras Negras, history and memory were imbued in sculptures and buildings and were mapped onto the built environment and the landscape. This is made explicit both in Stela 14 and in the reuse of sculptures on Structure O-13.

It is also made explicit in the transformation of Structure O-13, located on the East Group Plaza, into a place for historical revision and for the commemoration and veneration of ancestors from the polity's long history, beginning with the early sixth-century Yat Ahk I. This building likely was chosen as Itzam K'an Ahk II's burial place and made into a place for memory because it was located at the nexus of the processional causeways that connected the West and South groups, where ancestors' remains and sculptural embodiments continued to be present. I suggest that the use of these causeways for the performance of memory contributed to the development of O-13 into a place for commemoration, and, furthermore, that processions and performances influenced the design of sculptures, buildings, and the site plan in the second half of the eighth century, if not before.

Yet this was not the only building that was a site of memory and for commemoration. Other funerary pyramids had their own histories of use and were transformed into places of memory—first for the ancestor who was buried in the building, and then for his descendant who installed monuments on the building. These transformations in building use created an actual and metaphorical layering of memory on and in the building. For example, excavations by Escobedo and Zamora (2001b:206) demonstrate that Structure R-5 existed in a previous iteration before it became K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's funerary pyramid.² The interment of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I altered the building. Another modification occurred when Itzam K'an Ahk I installed his images and sculptural embodiments on the building. The building nevertheless retained a connection to K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I, for there were later commemorations of him in that place, as indicated by Panel 4's pictorial and textual narrations. The changes to the building, therefore, did not completely transform it but added to it, and over time the building accumulated histories and potency.

For Piedras Negras Structure O-13, the importance of the place and its own material histories is clear. The perception of Structure O-13 as a site of memory is made explicit in the installation of stelae from multiple reigns on the building, in the performance and recounting of a ceremony commemorating Itzam K'an Ahk II on Panel 3, and in the reuse of objects in the service of reshaping narratives about the past.

The continued use of this building and others over time, with new versions built one on top of another, is characteristic of building reuse across the southern Maya lowlands in the Classic period. Mock (1998:11) has described the layering of buildings in this way as a layering of the souls of those buildings, such that the place accrued ancestral power as each layer was enveloped within the next. Maya buildings became transformed because of this practice. Yet it is not just that they grew larger, for of course they did, but that the structure comprised the layers—those materializations from the past—and thereby was saturated with memory.

Another example of a place in which the narrations and materials of the past coincided is Copán's Temple 26. Extensive excavations have demonstrated that this pyramid contained layers of buildings, sculptures, and tombs from the fourth to

the eighth century (W. Fash 2001, 2002; W. Fash, B. Fash, and Davis-Salazar 2004; Stuart 2004b). Excavations and associated epigraphic studies have revealed that in the early eighth century, Ruler 12 (nicknamed “Smoke Imix”) was buried in this building, and his successor, Waxaklajuun Ubaah K’awiil, dedicated the first version of the Hieroglyphic Stairway. The text inscribed on the stairway provides a lengthy narration of the dynasty’s history and recounts the same span of time as the materials interred beneath it.

The narration about the past and the materials from that past thus were integrated in and on the same physical structure. The presence of the buried monuments, dynasts, and buildings from the beginning of the dynasty within the temple undoubtedly influenced the choice of this building both for Ruler 12’s tomb and for the dynastic chronicle. The sculptures and architectural layers buried within it physically constituted—and were the indexical remains of—the cycles of history that the text narrated. Temple 26, therefore, is a place where the ancient Maya engaged with their past through the creation of narrations and the handling of objects in an integrated manner. There, two different ways of accessing and shaping the past came together in one building and its life history (see O’Neil 2010). Furthermore, these narrations likely were performed in processions up the stairway that corresponded to movement through history, proceeding backward in time.

On buildings such as Copán Temple 26 or Piedras Negras Structure O-13, therefore, the Maya created new sculptures with narrations that acknowledged that the structure was a place of memory and for commemoration. These narrations may be complementary to the material remains that make up the structure, although as exemplified by Piedras Negras Structure O-13, these narratives could be modified.

For the ancient Maya at Piedras Negras, engaging with sculptures and engaging with history were intertwined. Nevertheless, this intertwining was not necessarily a part of the sculptures’ original use or the motivation for making and dedicating them. Instead, layers of meaning were added over time, and the sculptures and performances of them guided these transformations. Moreover, making and engaging with sculptures changed over time, not only because of conscious choice on the part of sculptors, rulers, or their advisers but also because of the agency of the objects that guided engagement and prescribed how future sculptures were made—for the older, still-vital sculptures had to be kept in dialogue. Moreover, regardless of the exact explanation we may reconstruct regarding uses and treatments of sculptures in relation to political, historical, and cultural contexts, the value and power that the Maya perceived in these sculptures—both in their preservation and in their destruction—are appreciably evident.

Epilogue

Fragmented Forms in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries

The history of modern engagement with the monumental stone sculptures of Piedras Negras is another essential part of their life histories. The monuments underwent physical changes that generally accompanied or resulted in radical transformations in how people perceived them. Through these transformations, the monuments became part of new geographic, social, and economic networks and institutions.

The Piedras Negras stone monuments have been the object of attention of explorers and archaeologists for over a century. Yet, starting in the middle of the twentieth century, they also became the target of looters and art dealers. Many monuments were moved, cut in fragments, consolidated, and recarved, and many fragments were abandoned at the site as detritus. These actions physically changed the monuments and fundamentally altered their identity, transforming them from religious entities, sacred relics, or archaeological artifacts into commodities and artworks or into discarded waste. Fragmenting often was deemed necessary to transform them into commodities, although reconstruction and recarving were often required for their conversion into artworks and museum pieces. But these conversions were not the end of the story, and this chapter also explores the contestation of ownership of selected monuments by various international parties who claimed them as property or as historical and artistic heritage.

After Piedras Negras was abandoned in the ninth or tenth century CE, the monuments remained veiled by jungle growth for nearly a millennium. As early as the nineteenth century, the Lacandon Maya made pilgrimages to the ruins and left incense burners in ruined buildings (Houston et al. 2001:84–85; Satterthwaite 1946:18). In the nineteenth century, woodcutters and chicleros also passed through the ruins to search for and extract lumber and chicle, and Europeans and North Americans began to visit Piedras Negras as well. This was the beginning of the site's transformation into a locus not only for exploration and research but also for extraction of cultural resources, including its sculptures. Within seven decades, the site would be nearly denuded of its stone monuments.

The first monuments left the site in the late nineteenth century. Austrian explorer Teobert Maler (1901) visited Piedras Negras between 1895 and 1899 and discovered numerous sculptures. He brought two of them—Piedras Negras Panels 1 and 2—to the United States for Harvard University's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (Mayer 1980:9; Morley 1937–38, 3:16, 93). These remain in the museum's collection, and Panel 2 has been exhibited in multiple museum exhibitions across the United States (e.g., Cahill 1933, plate 45; Finamore and Houston 2010:110–11).¹

The archaeological project of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (now called the Penn Museum) discovered several sculptures at Piedras Negras during excavations in the 1930s. They also moved monuments from the site to display in Guatemalan and American museums. Using the skills, infrastructure, and techniques of the woodcutting and chicle industries, they moved stelae, panels, and altars out of the Petén jungle and to Guatemala City and Philadelphia. Piedras Negras Panel 4; Stelae 6, 15, 33, and 36; and three of the four supports of Altar 4 were transported to Guatemala City circa 1933 for display in the Sala Arqueológica of the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología (MUNAE). Other monuments, including Panels 3 and 12, Stelae 12 and 14, and Throne 1, were transported to the Penn Museum under a ten-year loan, with Guatemala retaining title to the sculptures (Mason 1934:2; 1935:545, 552, 568; Villacorta 1933:10–18). The Penn Museum mainly took broken sculptures (Mason 1935:552). They consolidated and returned most of them to Guatemala in 1947, although they did not return Stela 14, which remains in the Museum today.²

Movement of the massive sculptures was a complicated procedure. Mason (1935:545) described their transport by land and water with romanticized flair in a 1935 *National*

Geographic Magazine article; photographs in the article and the Penn Museum's archives document the laborious efforts (fig. E.1). They used the strength of men, machines, and oxen and went to great lengths to transfer the sculptures without fragmenting them further. Mason (1935:563, 568–70) wrote that it took one week to get the four parts of Stela 12 down the road (about thirty miles) to a navigable part of the Usumacinta River (see also Danien 2001:41). The monuments then traveled by river to the Álvaro Obregón seaport, though this was only the beginning of the journey. From there, the monuments destined for Guatemala City traveled north by ship to New Orleans and then south to Puerto Barrios on Guatemala's Caribbean coast. After this, they traveled by train to Guatemala City. Mason (1935:570) remarked that this journey covered about 2,300 miles, although the distance between Piedras Negras and Guatemala City is only 180 miles as the crow flies.

The sculptures that went to Philadelphia were installed in the Penn Museum's Maya Hall, which opened on 12 December 1933 (Mason 1934:1). Photographs in the museum's archives show



Figure E.1. Oxen hauling a monument out of Piedras Negras, ca. 1931. Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Image #15690.

the elaborate support, pulley, and ladder system that they used to raise the sculptures and move them through a window into the gallery.³ Despite efforts to keep the monuments intact, twenty-six inches from the base of Stela 40 had to be sawn off so that it could be erected in the Maya Hall. Nevertheless, Mason (1934:13; 1935:561) stressed that the pieces could be reunited at any time.

Regarding the sculptures' display in Philadelphia, Mason (1934:1–2) wrote that “artists and archeologists were enabled for the first time to see original examples of massive Maya monuments without the expense and trouble of a long and arduous journey into the forests of Guatemala, Honduras, and Southern Mexico.” He also explained that the removal of sculptures should not be considered “vandalism” but a “rescue . . . from certain ultimate destruction in the deep jungles” caused by elements such as environmental destruction, erosion, and vandalism by chicle gatherers and lumbermen. His emphasis here suggests that there may have been some criticism of the museum taking these monuments, although I have not found evidence for this.

Looting and the Art Market

The Piedras Negras sculptures played a crucial role in Maya historiography in the twentieth century, most notably in the recognition of historical content in the Maya inscriptions (e.g., Proskouriakoff 1960). But at the same time as scholars were using them to make progress in understanding the Classic Maya civilization and inscriptions, looters—starting in the late 1950s but culminating in the 1960s—began to destroy them in order to sell the fragments to art dealers, museums, and private collectors.

The extraction of monuments from Piedras Negras and other Maya sites in the middle of the twentieth century was drastically different from the earlier removals. The Guatemalan government had approved the taking of monuments from Piedras Negras in the 1930s, and those sent to the United States traveled as temporary loans. But beginning in the 1950s, looters moved sculptures from Piedras Negras and elsewhere without the consent of their home countries (I. Graham 2010:367–68; Mayer 1980:10). Another significant difference was the treatment of the sculptures. When the Penn Museum removed monuments in the 1930s, the workers went to great lengths to keep the sculptures intact. In contrast, the later looting depended on physical fragmentation of the monuments. The illicit trade thus destroyed not only the sculptures' archaeological contexts but also the monuments themselves.

Looters removed portions of these sculptures and sold them to networks of the international art and antiquities market. Eager dealers, museums, and private collectors soon acquired them. Their fragmentation, which enabled removal, became a standard part of their transformation from religious or political objects—or archaeological artifacts in Maya sites—into commodities in dealers' hands and objects of aesthetic or cultural value in art galleries and museums. Some sculptures were cut up and jettisoned at the site, and other fragments were lost or destroyed.

Many fragments ended up in the wealthiest and most cultured places in Europe and the United States, but looting was a dangerous business. Looters often carried guns and even committed murder to obtain monuments. Those who tried to protect or simply document the monuments were at times threatened and even killed. For instance, Pedro Arturo Sierra del Valle, a Tikal park ranger who accompanied

Ian Graham to the site of La Naya in 1971, was murdered when Graham and his assistants interrupted looters at work there (I. Graham 2010:349–54; Robertson 1972:147; Sibley 1972:36; Sullivan 1971:8).

A great deal of money was at stake, especially once monuments had been smuggled out of Mexico and Central America. In the early 1970s, for example, Machaquilá Stela 2 was sold in Belize (then British Honduras) for \$1,800 or \$3,000 (I. Graham 2010:436; Isenberg 1976).⁴ But in 1972, the California dealer Clive Hollinshead asked \$350 thousand for it, although the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) apprehended him before he could sell it (Lacombe 1976:8).⁵ The violence and high economic stakes of looting have continued over the decades. Indeed, John Dorfman (1998:29) reported that in 1997, a Yaxhá site guard was murdered when a stela was stolen (see also Dobrzynski 1998; Honan 1995). Dorfman (1998:29) cited a figure of \$120 million a year for the market of Maya looting, although he noted that the looters themselves only get a few hundred dollars for each object they sell.⁶

Some of the looting in Guatemala and Mexico in the 1960s was commissioned and performed locally. There are reports that people from Tenosique, in the Mexican state of Tabasco, were involved in the looting of Piedras Negras sculptures (Stuart and Graham 2003:8). Graham (2010:431) names a particular Tabascan man who had chicle and lumber concessions in the region as the organizer of the dismantling and looting of the Piedras Negras stelae. Graham recounts that this man set up camp at El Cayo, an archaeological site on the Mexican side of the Usumacinta River, upriver from Piedras Negras, and removed the monuments from Piedras Negras by taking them across the river to Mexico.

In addition, in at least one case on Guatemala's eastern border, local police were charged as accomplices to looting. As reported in the 30 March 1967 *New York Times*, "Ten men led by Mario Cosillo Ortiz, the former police chief of a town in Guatemala's Petén region, near the British Honduran border, have been arrested on charges of stealing ancient Mayan archeological treasures and shipping them over the border for sale to collectors. Mr. Cosillo Ortiz was chief of the police in Melchor de Mencos" (*New York Times* 1967:25). The article does not identify the archaeological site from which the antiquities came.

In other instances, looting and smuggling were commissioned or aided by wealthy dealers and investors from outside Mexico and Central America (Coggins 1972:263; Melton 1968a:1). One of them was the American Everett Rassiga, a former airplane pilot who became an antiquities dealer and was involved in the removal of a stucco façade from the site of Placeres in Campeche (Freidel 2000:24; I. Graham 2010:388–89).

Looters would cut the monuments into smaller pieces in order to smuggle them in boxes and suitcases that they transported in airplanes, helicopters, boats, or on the backs of people and mules (Coggins 1972:265, fig. 2; Melton 1968a:20; Meyer 1972:14–15). They also commonly trimmed the monuments in order to salvage carved figural forms but lighten the weight of the pieces destined for removal. The trimming frequently destroyed texts and images carved on the monuments' sides, backs, and tops (Coggins 1969:94). This type of fragmentation was especially damaging because it was undertaken while the decipherment of the hieroglyphs was in its infancy, and much important information was lost. In response, Graham founded a project in 1968 to document monuments and inscriptions that were increasingly vulnerable to fragmentation and looting (Brenner, n.d.; I. Graham 1971:63; Meyer

1972:3–4; 1973:26–27). This project became the Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions (CMHI) and is part of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University.

Looters used various techniques to fragment the monuments. One technique was to cut the monuments with power saws, some of them diamond-tipped (Coggin 1969:94; Reinhold 1973:97). Careful sawing reduced the loss of carved forms, although an erratic saw could destroy a monument. Other methods were to use chisels, acid, and fires to break up stelae (Coggin 1972:263; Lacombe 1976:4; Meyer 1972:15–16; Robertson 1972:154); these methods were even more destructive, at times breaking the monuments into pieces.

In the middle of the twentieth century, looters damaged nearly all of the Piedras Negras carved stelae that the Penn Museum had not removed in the 1930s. Multiple monuments or pieces of monuments from the South Group, for example, including Stelae 25, 26, 29, 32, 34, and 35, were looted. Looters attacked most of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's monuments from Structure J-4 as well, including Stelae 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8. Also fragmented were Stelae 9, 10, and 11, three of Itzam K'an Ahk II's monuments from Structure J-3. Some stelae at the site were not cut or looted, but these were eroded or did not have substantial carving.

Looters sliced the backs and sides off some stelae and cut the fronts into pieces, but they collected the front pieces and sold them together. This was the case for Stela 34, whose image of Itzam K'an Ahk I was fragmented but reassembled. The Parisian Galerie Jeanne Bucher, which primarily specializes in modern painting but purchased a number of Maya works in the 1960s, acquired this stela before 1966 (see Galerie Jeanne Bucher 1966, plate 17). Stela 2 also was fragmented and later reconstructed; looters sawed off its back, sides, and top, which had both glyphs and human figures, and cut the rest of the monument into pieces (Coggin 1969:96; Stuart and Graham 2003:21).⁷ They reassembled the front of the monument and its image of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II. This stela was acquired by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) from the Stendahl Galleries circa 1966 (Huber 2006: 2–3; Mayer 1980, plate 20).⁸

In other cases, looters attempted to cut around the figures on stelae to extract those figures for transport and sale. The saw lines traced around the edges of faces and headdresses to keep them intact but sacrificed other parts of the sculptures, including texts, costume elements, and human bodies below the neck. For example, Stela 25 was trimmed below the ruler's chin and near the top of the headdress (Alfonzo 1986:203, fig. 2) (fig.



a.



b.

Figure E.2. Fragment, Piedras Negras Stela 25. Photographs by author, 2011. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala.

Figure E.3. Fragment, Piedras Negras Stela 7. Photograph by author, 2011. Courtesy of the Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología de Guatemala.



E.2; compare with fig. I.5). Similarly, looters cut around the face and headdress of Stela 7 (fig. E.3; compare with fig. 3.17).⁹ It appears that human faces were deemed especially valuable, for when cutting the monuments, looters usually attempted to preserve the face of the portrayed ruler or other person. This contrasts with Classic period modifications of stelae that generally focused on pecking or breaking the eyes, noses, or mouths or violently smashing the faces as part of dismantling the monuments.

In other cases, looters attempted to isolate the entire body of a central figure but failed, as was the case for Stela 8.¹⁰ Photographs of Stela 8 from the 1970s show the remains of the carved body of K'inich Yonal Ahk II at Piedras Negras after looters damaged the monument.¹¹ The saw cuts follow the contours of his body, but the looters must have accidentally cut his proper right leg while they worked to separate the captive who was portrayed kneeling at the ruler's feet (fig. E.4; compare with fig. 2.13). As a result, they abandoned the large fragment with the ruler's body. The captive that knelt on the ruler's left-hand side was taken away.¹² The other captive also was cut from the monument, but it was abandoned at the site. Fortunately, the PNAP rediscovered this captive during excavations and buried it at Piedras Negras for its protection (Stephen Houston, personal communication, 2011).

As they did with Stela 8, looters frequently removed the captives from the Piedras Negras warrior stelae, including Stelae 4, 9, 26, and 35, perhaps because the captives were relatively small and could be transported without fragmenting the depicted person's form. The captive at the lower right of the front of Stela 4, for example, was looted and became part of the collection of the Galerie Jeanne Bucher in Paris



Figure E.4. Fragment of Piedras Negras Stela 8 with body of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II (Ruler 3), after fragmentation by looters. Photograph by Ian Graham, Peabody Museum #2004.15.1673.4. Courtesy of the Maya Corpus Program, Peabody Museum, © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

(Donald Hales, personal communication, 2010).¹³ At least one of the captives on Stela 26 was looted as well; Graham's unpublished notes in the CMHI archives report that one of this stela's carved captives was once in Mexico City and owned by a French collector.¹⁴ Stuart and Graham (2003:50) also report that looters in the 1960s removed the captive from Stela 9. Finally, a 2005 photograph taken at Piedras Negras shows that the captive from Stela 35 had been cut from the monument. Looters must have taken it, although its current location is unknown. They also took the top of the monument, now at the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum für Völkerkunde in Köln, Germany (fig. E.5).¹⁵ In addition, some heads from rulers' belt decorations or thrones were cut from monuments and sold to collectors and museums. One fragment of Stela 4, with only the head from the ruler's belt, is now



a.



b.



c.

Figure E.5. Piedras Negras Stela 35, before and after looting. a. Photograph by Teobert Maler, ca. 1899. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #2004.24.2659. Digital File #130910008. b. Upper fragment in Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, Köln, Germany. Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum Inventory #60333, Sammlung Ludwig #SL/XXXIII. Photo © Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, rba_c023101. c. Lower fragment at Piedras Negras. Photograph by Stephen D. Houston, ca. 1997–2005. Courtesy of Stephen D. Houston.

in the Rufino Tamayo Museum in Oaxaca (Teufel 2004:321). The head ornament from the throne portrayed on Stela 10 also was removed, although its whereabouts are unknown.¹⁶

The twentieth-century art market's preference for human faces also inspired the modern recarving of faces on stelae that the ancient Maya had modified. In the Late Classic period, for example, the Maya had smashed the face of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I on Piedras Negras Stela 25. But in the second half of the twentieth century, after looters fragmented Stela 25, the facial area was completely recarved (Alfonzo

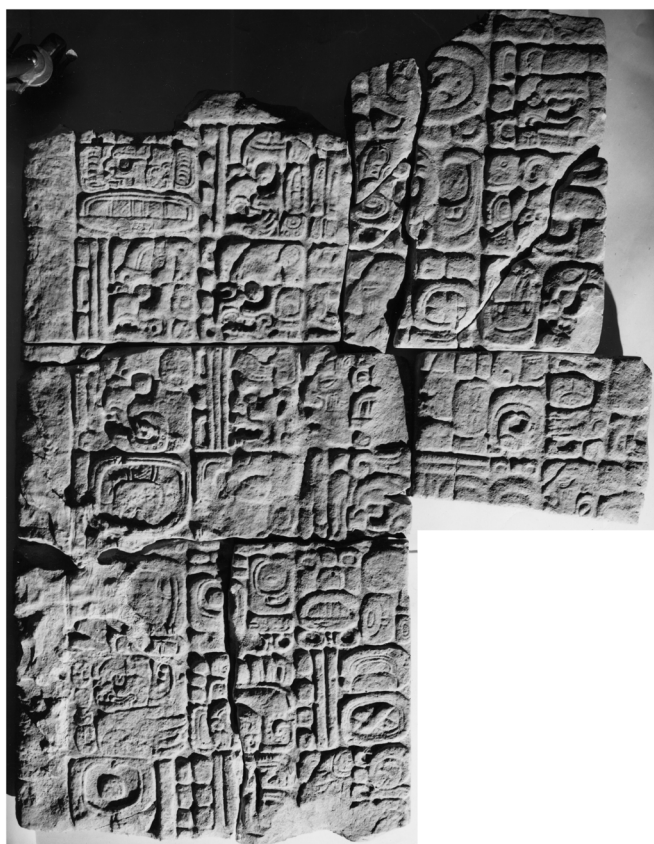


Figure E.6. Piedras Negras Stela 32, before and after recarving, with Lacanhá Stela 1 for comparison.

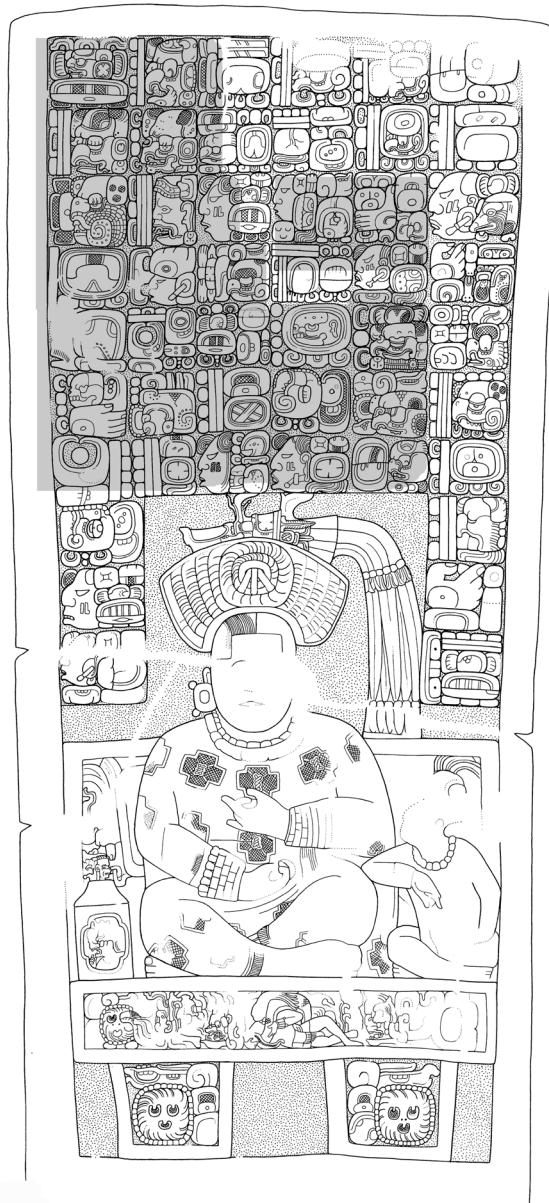
a. Piedras Negras Stela 32, ca. 1899. Photograph by Teobert Maler. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University. Peabody ID #2004.29.7558. Digital File #9800005.

b. Piedras Negras Stela 32, ca. 1968, cut, recarved, and labeled as "Large Mayan Limestone Stele, Petén, Guatemala, Classic, c. 500 A.D." Photograph from Parke-Bernet Galleries (1968:73, fig. 109).

Photograph Courtesy of Sotheby's, Inc. © 2011. c. Lacanhá Stela 1, drawing by Simon Martin. Courtesy of Simon Martin. (Images not to scale.)



a.



b.

Figure E.7. Fragments of Piedras Negras Stela 3 compared with stela when whole. a. Portion of Piedras Negras Stela 3, back, top, ca. 1966, after fragmentation and looting. Note that glyphs on right side are incorrectly placed (upper right fragment should be shifted down; bottom right fragment should be at top right). Photograph by Ian Graham, Courtesy of the Maya Corpus Program, Peabody Museum, © President and Fellows of Harvard College. b. Area of looted fragments overlain onto drawing of Stela 3: shaded area marks extent of the fragments acquired by the Brooklyn Museum. Drawing by David Stuart, *Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions*, vol. 9, pt. 1, *Piedras Negras*, reproduced courtesy of the President and Fellows of Harvard College. With modification by author. (Images not to scale.)



Figure E.8. Display of the Piedras Negras Stela 3 fragments (right) in the Brooklyn Museum. Brooklyn Museum Archives. Photograph Collection [S06]. Museum building: interiors. Arts of Africa, the Pacific and the Americas. Mesoamerica installation view (n.d.).

1986:203) (fig. E.2; compare with fig. I.5). They had to make the head smaller, however, to squeeze new eyes, a nose, and a mouth from the significantly reduced stone mass. In refiguring ancient bodies in accord with contemporary taste, modern carvers obliterated essential parts of this and other sculptures' life histories and thereby obfuscated significant indices of Classic Maya interactions with them. Fortunately, in at least one case, the reconstruction was not permanent, for the ruler's face on Stela 2 was reconstructed with hard putty fill circa 1966, but this putty was removed in 1993.¹⁷

Other stelae were more substantially recarved. Piedras Negras Stela 32 was largely eroded when Maler (1901, plate XXVI) photographed it, and little more than an outline of the original figure remained (fig. E.6). However, a 1968 Parke-Bernet Galleries catalog advertised an unidentified Maya stela that actually is Stela 32 after significant recarving (Mayer 1980:11; Parke-Bernet Galleries 1968:72–73, fig. 109). The stela had been cut into pieces, its upper text had been removed, and its entire front surface was recarved. Notably, the modern sculptors recarved Stela 32 with Lacanhá Stela 1 as the inspiration for form and imagery. They added new features to the figure's body and costume, transforming his body position to one in which his right arm is bent across his torso and holds a vertical spear, exactly like the Lacanhá stela. Lacanhá Stela 1 also had been fragmented and looted, and its ruler's face was recarved as well (Galerie Jeanne Bucher 1966, plate 11; O'Neil 2003).

Despite the preference for the faces and bodies of Maya sculptures, the demand for Maya sculptures was so voracious that looters and dealers successfully sold partial images and text blocks. Piedras Negras Stela 3 is a noteworthy example. In the

late 1950s or early 1960s, looters fragmented Stela 3. They tried to extract the body of Lady K'atun Ajaw from Stela 3 by cutting around her body and headdress. However, they left these at the site.¹⁸ They also cut the text from the upper portion of Stela 3 into many pieces.

Looters frequently abandoned text fragments, preferring instead the figural forms, and they left many of Stela 3's text fragments at Piedras Negras.¹⁹ However, they extracted and sold at least eleven fragments of the Stela 3 text (Coggins 1969:96; J. Luján Muñoz 1966:13, 14, 19, and fig. 4) (fig. E.7). In October 1964, the Brooklyn Museum purchased those fragments for \$3,000 from Robert Huber, a dealer in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.²⁰ In May 1965, the Brooklyn Museum exhibited them in their Hall of the Americas and juxtaposed the sculpture fragments with painted ceramic vessels (fig. E.8). Although Huber had sold them as pieces from an unidentified Maya stela, Jorge Luján Muñoz (1966) later identified them as a Piedras Negras monument and denounced their acquisition.²¹

Piedras Negras Sculptures in Museums

The fates of the Piedras Negras monuments have been various, and they are now scattered throughout the world—in Guatemala, Mexico, the United States, Europe, and Japan. Distinct pieces of the same monument are in museums and private collections on separate continents.

Most of the sculptures are in Guatemala. The majority of the monuments that the Penn Museum removed in the 1930s are displayed in Guatemala's MUNAE. Fragments of Stelae 3, 7, and 25 also are in the MUNAE collection, but these had been looted. For a time they were in collections in the United States, Mexico, and Europe but later were returned to Guatemala.²² In addition, some monuments were never removed and remain on site at Piedras Negras. Yet those not looted include only a few plain or eroded monuments, some partially cut but abandoned stelae, and the many fragments that were jettisoned when other parts of monuments were extracted.

Some Piedras Negras sculptural fragments are in Mexico. One small fragment of Stela 3's lower portion, which bears the image of a lidded vessel, is in a private collection in Mérida (I. Graham 2010:432; Stuart and Graham 2003:24), and the head from the ruler's belt on Stela 4 is in the Rufino Tamayo Museum in Oaxaca (Teufel 2004:321).²³ In addition, at least one set of fragments is in Japan; these two fragments, from the text of Stela 29, are in Tokyo (Mayer 1995:14, plate 39).

Several monument fragments are in Europe. For instance, the top of Stela 25, which has an image of the Principal Bird Deity, is in the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart (Doris Kurella, personal communication, 2010; Mayer 1987:7, plate 12). The Parisian Galerie Jeanne Bucher has much of Stela 34 (Galerie Jeanne Bucher 1966, plate 17); they reportedly once had a figure of a captive from Stela 4 also (Donald Hales, personal communication, 2010). The upper half of Stela 35 became part of the Ludwig Collection and then the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum für Völkerkunde in Köln, Germany (Bolz 1975, plate XXXIII; J. Luján Muñoz 1985:464) (fig. E.5).²⁴ In addition, a portion of Stela 11 was reportedly in a Swiss private collection in the early 1990s (Stuart and Graham 2003:56).

Other Piedras Negras monuments and fragments are in the United States. Stela 14, which was removed in the 1930s, remains in the Penn Museum (plate 3). The front of Stela 2 is at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (Mayer 1980, plate 20), and the top half of Stela 11 is in the Houston Museum of Fine Arts (Mayer 1987:7, plate 11).²⁵ The large upper portion of Stela 5 was in the collection of the Museum of Primitive Art and is now part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Errington 1994:201–202).²⁶ Stela 5 is on a long-term loan from Guatemala and is displayed in the Metropolitan's Michael C. Rockefeller Wing.

In contrast to these identified locations, some fragments' current whereabouts are not public knowledge. For example, Parke-Bernet Galleries sold the recarved Stela 32 to an unidentified private collector, and its current location is undisclosed (Stacy Goodman, personal communication, 2002; Parke-Bernet Galleries 1968:72–73, fig. 109). In addition, there are rumors of other monument fragments in undisclosed private collections in Europe, North America, and Guatemala.

Looters also fragmented and removed monuments from other sites in Chiapas and the Petén, including La Amelia, Calakmul, Cancuén, El Cayo, Dos Pilas, La Florida, Lacanhá, Motul de San José, Naranjo, El Perú, Tortuguero, and El Zapote. In addition to those mentioned above, museums with whole or fragmented Maya sculptures include the Kimbell Art Museum (Fort Worth, Texas), the Dallas Museum of Art (Dallas, Texas), the New Orleans Museum of Art (New Orleans, Louisiana), the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection (Washington, D.C.), and the Cleveland Museum of Art (Cleveland, Ohio), in the United States, in addition to museums and art galleries in Europe, such as the *Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* (Brussels, Belgium), the Rietberg Museum (Zurich, Switzerland), and the Museum für Völkerkunde (Berlin, Germany), and private collections in Europe and North America (Coggins 1969, 1970; Mayer 1978, 1980, 1984, 1987, 1995).

With the fragmentation, transport, and sale of Piedras Negras sculptures in the mid-twentieth century, looters transformed some pieces of what had been religious and cultural objects into unrecognizable refuse. Other pieces were transformed into valuable commodities for sale. Many were later moved into museum collections, whether purchased by the museums or donated by collectors.

Richard Davis (1997:176–77, 231–32) discusses a comparable transformation of medieval Indian sculptures in the first half of the twentieth century as a taxonomic shift from idols to art in the eyes of Western viewers. He also theorizes the transformation of specific objects into commodities in the art and antiquities market. Davis uses the conceptualizations of Arjun Appadurai (1986) and Igor Kopytoff (1986) regarding the possibility for objects to move in and out of commodity status. Objects created for religious purposes, for example, may be turned into commodities when they are taken from temples or ruins and sold into the art market. Davis (1997:231–32) also cites Kopytoff's characterization of "terminal commoditization," in which "further exchange of an object is precluded by legal or cultural fiat." An object's acquisition by a museum may be a "terminal commoditization," although museums may deaccession pieces, at which point the objects may become commodities again. Another example of terminal commoditization is when objects are repatriated to their source countries, whether returned to the temple where originally displayed or sent to a museum.

The straight cuts from the modern saw, the cracks caused by fire or acid, and the physical removal of monuments from Piedras Negras transformed these objects and divorced them from earlier contexts and meanings. In dealers' hands, they were commodities. In collectors' hands, they were prized treasures or simply investments (see I. Graham 2010:430). In their new contexts in galleries, museums, and some private collections, they became art objects to be admired, possessed, and desired. However, the very stones and the fractures coursing through them recall those earlier meanings and the violence that changed their state and status.

The dealers and museums that acquired the sculptures consolidated and restored them, using putty fill, cement, and adhesives to fill in and hide the cuts of the power saw. We can add this restoration practice to Davis's theorization of museum display and labeling conventions that erase the signs of an object's previous commodity status (see R. Davis 1997:231–32). Yet in the case of Maya sculptures, the reconstructions endeavor to erase not only signs of commodity status but also indices of violence and displacement.

Although the adhesives and fillers may attempt to obscure moments of violence, the traces are still visible. These traces evoke consideration of the objects' wholeness and their fragmentation, of how the objects once appeared, why they appear this way now, and what actions brought them to the museums. Through these indices of human action, phases of objects' life histories bleed out of their surfaces and inspire, to use Elsner's phrase, "two-directional interpretation" (2003:209–11), in which an object's material form signals previous states and multiple moments of human engagement with them.

Museums, Cultural Patrimony, and the Politics of Collecting Pre-Columbian Art

In the mid-twentieth century, both unknown monuments and known monuments that had been recorded and published as coming from archaeological sites in countries such as Guatemala and Mexico were removed by looters and sold to collectors and museums. In the late 1960s, during the height of the looting and acquisition of Maya stone sculptures, Clemency Coggins (1969:94) denounced museums for buying the monuments despite the fact that they came from known, published sites, as was the case for Piedras Negras.

Even as museums and collectors in the 1960s and early 1970s were eagerly acquiring Maya sculptures, international efforts were underway with aims to control and prevent looting and to lobby for the return of artifacts to their home countries. Outspoken critics came from Guatemala, Mexico, the United States, and Europe. These included Stella Cheesman, Guatemalan consul-general in Houston (Melton 1968a:1); Clemency Coggins (1969, 1971, 1972), an American art historian; Laura de García Prendes of the Guatemalan Asociación Tikal (Meyer 1972:21, 39–40); Ian Graham, founder of the CMHI; Jorge Luján Muñoz (1966, 1985), a Guatemalan historian, lawyer, and ambassador in Spain; Karl Herbert Mayer (1978, 1980, 1984, 1987, 1995), an Austrian scholar; Karl Ernest Meyer (1972, 1973), an American journalist; Merle Greene Robertson (1972), an American artist; and Alberto Ruz Lhuillier, a Mexican archaeologist (Meyer 1972:7–8), among others. A number of journalists from the *New York Times*, including Tad Szulc (1970), John Sibley (1972),

and Robert Reinhold (1973), also made the depredation known to a wider American public; the coverage in the *New York Times* was particularly fitting because New York City collections held at least two Piedras Negras sculptures.

The sculptures purchased in the 1960s and early 1970s were imported before the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and before the United States and European countries had accepted the convention. Guatemala and Mexico already had laws, however, that prohibited the change of location of archaeological and historical objects and monuments without the express authorization of their governments. Jorge Luján Muñoz (1966:20) affirmed that a law of 24 April 1931 declared Piedras Negras a Guatemalan “national monument” and that additional legislation from 1936 and 1947 had been designed to protect the sculptures.²⁷ Regarding Mexico, James Nafziger (1975:71) stated that Mexican law from 1934 “had established national ownership of all immovable archaeological material in the public domain, and precluded the export of all works of art or antiquities without an export license.” Yet for decades, the laws were not sufficiently enforced, and dealers, museums, and collectors willfully turned a blind eye toward those countries’ laws (see Melton 1968c:19).

In the end, the level of destruction wrought on the sculptures was one of the catalysts for major changes to United States antiquities laws in the 1970s. Responding to the complete ravaging of this archaeological site and others, the critics mentioned above worked tirelessly in collaboration with scholars, journalists, lawmakers, and other activists in several countries to raise awareness about looting and insist on legislative reforms. Although the changes would be too late for Piedras Negras, some change was achieved and has led to the protection of other sites, although looting continues to take place.

The UNESCO General Conference that adopted the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property met in 1970. The convention was entered into force in 1972, but the United States did not accept it until 1983, with Japan’s acceptance in 2002 and Switzerland’s in 2003,²⁸ leaving open years of opportunity for the illicit looting and importation of ancient Maya artifacts in the United States, Asia, and Europe.²⁹ Even after the 1970 UNESCO Convention, Walter Sullivan (1971:8) reported that “its effectiveness is limited; under its terms, an importing country can only confiscate such contraband if the country from which it came is willing to reimburse the ‘innocent’ purchaser.” Furthermore, Tad Szulc (1970:5) reported that American officials doubted the treaty would have much efficacy without further measures such as massive border patrols, which were not part of the treaty.

Other attempts to enact legislation to reduce looting was a 1972 United States statute that forbade import into the United States of pre-Columbian monumental or architectural sculpture or murals without a certificate from the country of origin stating that its export did not violate that country’s laws (Honan 1991:16; Sibley 1972:36).³⁰ Nevertheless, although any import seized would be offered to the country of origin, the statute stated that the country of origin “must bear all expenses incurred incident to such return” (Merriman, Elsen, and Urice 2007:322); this was another impediment for developing countries. Moreover, this statute applied only to monumental sculpture and architectural pieces, and Honan (1991:16) cites

Coggins's observation that the illicit trade then turned to grave goods and smaller pieces such as Maya ceramic vessels, which are now plentiful in many American museums (see also Coggins 1998:54).

Guatemala and the United States enacted additional treaties and restrictions at various times to attempt to reduce the pillaging or recover looted items. The United States and Guatemala signed a bilateral treaty in 1984, for example, in which the United States "agreed to recover and return stolen Guatemalan archaeological and historical cultural property" (Coggins 2007:1). In 1991, responding to a formal request for protection from Guatemala, the United States imposed emergency import restrictions on all Maya archaeological artifacts, particularly from Guatemala's Department of the Petén, to be enforced by the United States Customs Service (Honan 1991:16).³¹ Finally, in the last decade, there has been more internal regulation among museums, and the Association of Art Museum Directors has published more stringent guidelines concerning the acquisition of antiquities, including those received as donations.³²

Despite these efforts, the depredation has not ceased, and looting-related violence continues to this day in Guatemala and elsewhere. Almost every archaeologist has at least one story—if not many—of finding fresh looters' pits. And when I visited Dos Pilas in 2008, the site guardians told the story of recently having been overtaken by men with machine guns, who proceeded to cut sections of carved steps and take them out of the site. The guards showed us the freshly sawn blocks and their carved inscriptions, which had been sliced down the middle.

Claims and Repatriation

Once the looted monuments from Piedras Negras began to turn up in collections outside Guatemala, authorities and individuals from Guatemala and the United States began to press for their return. In some cases, the repatriation was quick and straightforward. For example, in 1969, a portion of Stela 7 was exhibited at the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico as the "piece of the month" (INAH 1969:56–57, Foto 32). It was erroneously identified as having come from Campeche. However, as soon as it was revealed to be a Piedras Negras monument, the Mexican government returned it to Guatemala (L. Luján Muñoz 1969:7; Mayer 1984:6; Stuart and Graham 2003:40). Luis Luján Muñoz (1969:7) said it was returned "ante una gestión amistosa."³³ It remains in Guatemala's MUNAE collection (fig. E.3).

In other cases, the returns involved years of battles. Jorge Luján Muñoz (1966, 1985) attempted to use legal and diplomatic channels and public denouncement to press for the return of several monuments. However, Guatemala had little or no legal recourse to have the objects returned because individuals and institutions in the United States and other countries would not abide by the laws of the source countries. Nevertheless, some museums responded to political pressure. In 1966, J. Luján Muñoz published a scathing rebuke of the destruction and smuggling of Piedras Negras Stelae 3 and 5 and their display in New York City museums. Citing Guatemalan legislation from 1931—declaring Piedras Negras a Guatemalan national monument—and additional legislation from 1936 and 1947, J. Luján Muñoz (1966:20) claimed that the stelae were Guatemalan property and should be returned to Guatemala.

Graham (2010:431–32) writes that as soon as the Brooklyn Museum learned of the identity of the Piedras Negras fragments they had purchased, "the museum very

properly yielded title to the Guatemalan government.” However, the museum in reality resisted for a number of years, during which the Guatemalan embassy and the director of Guatemala’s Instituto de Antropología e Historia de Guatemala (IDAEH) exerted sustained pressure on the museum through the U.S. State Department and by way of direct communication with museum staff.

These efforts are evident in a series of letters, beginning in May 1966, that the State Department sent to the Brooklyn Museum.³⁴ Acting on a diplomatic note from the Embassy of Guatemala in Washington, the letter stated that the Stela 3 fragments were “apparently removed from their original place without permission,” and Guatemala expressed its desire to recover them. The fragments were described as “irreplaceable objects, archeological treasures of incomparable value, and hence, part of the historical and artistic heritage of Guatemala.”³⁵

An aide-mémoire sent by the Guatemalan embassy to the Brooklyn Museum claimed that the stela fragments were “part of the cultural treasure of the nation.” It also cited Legislative Decree 425 of 1947, which prohibited the destruction, alteration, or change of location of archaeological, historic, and artistic monuments, including stelae, and classified their illegal exportation “as a crime.”³⁶

However, the Brooklyn Museum claimed legal title to the fragments. They affirmed they had purchased the fragments from Robert Huber and “had no knowledge about the apparent improper removal of the pieces from Guatemala.”³⁷ The museum’s lawyers, the firm Davidson, Dawson and Clark, Counsellors at Law, supported them in this claim. Writing to Thomas F. Killoran of the State Department, the lawyers asserted that the Brooklyn Museum “purchased the fragments of Stela 3 from a reputable source in good faith for value and without notice of any defect in title. Accordingly, in our opinion the Museum’s title to the fragments cannot be questioned under any rule of law of which we are aware.”³⁸

They also mentioned that the museum had purchased the fragments with funds from the public trust. Acting curator Elizabeth Easby stated in a letter to Carlos Samayoa Chinchilla, director of IDAEH, that they could not “give them away” because the museum’s charter as a public institution required that they “legally dispose of objects purchased with trust funds only by sale or exchange.” She suggested that the museum could return the stela only “by means of an exchange or reciprocal loan of an object or objects of equivalent value.”³⁹ However, Samayoa Chinchilla replied that Guatemala could not pay the museum for the stela fragments. He proposed that the stela could remain in Brooklyn under the terms of a ten-year loan; after expiration of the loan, the stela would be returned to its legitimate owner, “el pueblo de Guatemala.”⁴⁰ The museum rejected this proposal and asserted that they could not renounce ownership of the monument.⁴¹

At the same time, international scholarly communities pressed the Brooklyn Museum—as well as the Museum of Primitive Art—to return the Piedras Negras stelae to Guatemala. Specifically, in 1968, the 38th International Congress of Americanists adopted a “resolution concerning the thefts and destruction of Maya monuments as well as other important precolumbian sculpture.”⁴² The resolution specifically recommended that the Brooklyn Museum and the Museum of Primitive Art, “in the name of scientific ethics and international collaboration, return these important precolumbian monuments to their rightful owner, the Government of Guatemala.”⁴³

Nonetheless, Thomas Buechner, the Brooklyn Museum director, responded that the museum could not return the fragments “without compensatory arrangements.”⁴⁴

In 1970, however, the Brooklyn Museum finally conceded. In a 1972 letter summarizing the series of events and decisions, lawyer Covington Hardee wrote that the museum relented once they learned that Nelson Rockefeller had decided to relinquish ownership of Stela 5 to the Guatemalan government.⁴⁵ Moreover, in the end, Robert Huber agreed to reimburse the Brooklyn Museum for the purchase of Stela 3; this reimbursement was half in trade and half in cash.⁴⁶

The Stela 3 fragments were handed over to the Guatemalan government on 5 June 1972 in a ceremony in Brooklyn in which the museum director, Duncan Cameron, released the fragments to the Guatemalan ambassador, Julio Asensio-Wunderlich. The article recounting this transfer cites Satterthwaite’s recognition of the fragments “with dismay . . . as the bones of an old friend” (Knox 1972:48). A draft of the museum’s press release quoted museum director Duncan Cameron, who said that the fragments were being returned because they “constitute part of an historical document more important in the land of its origin than in this country.”⁴⁷ This was meant to contrast explicitly with the idea that they were being returned because they were deemed “stolen property.”⁴⁸

The Stela 3 fragments first were transferred from Brooklyn to the Miami Science Museum (Mayer 1980:11; Stuart and Graham 2003:24). Notably, they had risen dramatically in monetary value from the time Brooklyn had purchased them. Brooklyn purchased the fragments for \$3,000 in 1964; however, when transported to Miami from Brooklyn in 1972, they were insured for \$120,000 (Lacombe 1976:7). This rise in value may have resulted from the identification of the fragments as coming from Piedras Negras, as well as the notoriety of their involvement in an international scandal.

Stela 3 was sent first to Miami, because the Miami Museum of Science was working to encourage cooperation between American museums and the Guatemalan government to assist in the recovery and conservation of looted Maya monuments. Charles Lacombe, who was affiliated with the Miami Museum of Science, wrote that the “Miami Formula” allowed museums or universities to borrow looted stelae from Guatemala or other source countries if they guaranteed restoration and exhibition of the stelae and acknowledged ownership by the country of origin (Lacombe 1976:7). They transferred the Stela 3 fragments to Miami under this plan and later returned them to Guatemala.

Guatemala later worked for the repatriation of other monuments from Piedras Negras and other sites. In 1985, J. Luján Muñoz again found that monuments had been taken from Guatemala and presented evidence that Piedras Negras Stelae 25 and 35 and Dos Pilas Stela 8 had been taken illegally. In particular, he reported that a fragment of Stela 25 was in the collection of the French art dealers Guy Loudmer and Hervé Poulain and was for sale in the Parisian auction house Hôtel des Ventes. The starting price was eight to ten thousand francs. J. Luján Muñoz (1985:461, 483) notes that the catalog did not provide a provenance for the piece, although it was clearly from Piedras Negras.

Serving as the Guatemalan ambassador in Spain, J. Luján Muñoz pursued the return of Stela 25 to Guatemala through legal and diplomatic channels. However, this method was not successful, and he had to obtain funding to purchase it. The

Plumsock Fund, associated with the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA) of Antigua, Guatemala, provided the money for its purchase, and the fragment was transferred to Guatemala's IDAEH in 1986 (Alfonzo 1986:202; Mayer 1986). In other words, Guatemala had to find money to purchase a sculpture that had been documented as coming from Piedras Negras and established as Guatemalan property but which subsequently had been stolen. The decision of the dealers and the French government to refuse to return the sculpture and insist instead on its purchase, while apparently legal, was ethically reprehensible.

Guatemala recovered and repatriated monuments from other sites through various means. For example, the Guatemalan government sued U.S. Customs for the return of the mutilated Naranjo Stela 30 (Coggins 1969:94, 96). Fragments of this stela had been smuggled to Houston via British Honduras in crates marked "machinery," but one crate allegedly broke open. Customs officers seized the fragments in 1967 and held them in a Houston warehouse, and Guatemala had to sue U.S. Customs for their release (*Houston Post* 1968; Melton 1968a, 1968b, 1969). Stela 30 was eventually returned to Guatemala (Robertson 1972:154). Another famous case of a monument's return was that of Machaquilá Stela 2. The FBI seized this stela in 1972, and the dealer Clive Hollinshead was convicted in Los Angeles Federal Court for illegal importation and transportation under federal stolen property law (Hughes 1977; Lacombe 1976:8–9; Nafziger 1975:72; see also I. Graham 2010:436–38).

There are other, more recent, cases of Guatemala pursuing monuments from American museums. Roger Atwood (2004:145) cites a Guatemalan campaign in 1997 for the return of looted materials from American museums, with international assistance. One result was the Denver Art Museum's return in 1998 of a carved wooden lintel from El Zotz. The lintel is now on display at MUNAE. Also targeted was the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) for accepting a donation of Maya ceramics in 1988. Both the press, especially the *Boston Globe*, and the Guatemalan government denounced the MFA, charging that the vessels were illegally exported. Despite the criticism, the MFA resisted return of the ceramics (Dorfman 1998:29). The MFA weathered the storm, and this collection was recently reinstalled in the MFA's new Art of the Americas wing. Guatemala's claims for repatriation, of course, are not in a vacuum and are analogous to the demands for the return of antiquities from other areas of the world, including Greece and Italy (e.g., Gill and Chippindale 2007).

At the same time, there is criticism of the practice of repatriating objects. Avexnim Cojti Ren, a scholar and activist from Chichicastenango, Guatemala, critiques the repatriation of objects when they are given to national museums—and not to the sites for which they were originally made or to the descendants of the people who made them (e.g., Cojti Ren, n.d.). Alternatively, some argue against the return of antiquities because of the essential roles they play in museums throughout the world. For example, James Cuno, former president and director of the Art Institute of Chicago (now president and CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust), has argued that encyclopedic museums that hold objects from around the world and place pieces from many cultures side by side are important for encouraging tolerance and cross-cultural understanding (Cuno 2008:xxxi).

Setting aside the question of what should happen to the already removed objects, we must continue to advocate and diligently work for the protection of the

archaeological heritage of the ancient Maya and other civilizations of the world.⁴⁹ Also crucial is continued cooperation among museums across the world in helping to care for ancient sites and objects.

Finally, also necessary will be the continuing efforts of archaeologists and other organizations collaborating with and exchanging knowledge with communities near archaeological sites and working to provide opportunities for their economic growth. In his article on subsistence digging, David Matsuda contends that Central American governments and archaeologists should work to counter the poverty and inequality that may drive some people to participate in the looting trade. He claims that “the improvement of conditions for indigenous peoples must be a part of all funded excavation work” (Matsuda 1998:94). A number of organizations are working with communities in the Americas and elsewhere to protect ruins and encourage economic growth in the communities surrounding archaeological sites. These include the Maya Area Cultural Heritage Initiative, the Sustainable Preservation Initiative, and archaeological projects at places such as Chocó and Cancún, among others (see Bawaya 2005; Breglia 2007; Kraemer 2008). Hopefully more projects will follow their lead.

Life Histories and Cultural Biographies

The changes to monuments described in this chapter are iterations of these objects’ life histories and cultural biographies, which began at the moment they were created and continue as the objects endure through time. Although most of this book investigates the life histories of Maya monuments in the ancient past, their life histories and cultural biographies also include the modern period, although this may be categorically and qualitatively different from earlier periods. Indeed, objects’ life histories and cultural biographies involve objects in motion. These stories are narratives of things persisting through time and coming into contact with different “interpretive communities” that may engage with the things, even if in a manner entirely different from those of earlier communities (see R. Davis 1997:8).⁵⁰

In pre-Columbian Mesoamerica, objects were traded and otherwise moved and modified. People in ancient Costa Rica, for example, acquired and cut up Early Classic Maya greenstone celts, dividing their images and hieroglyphic texts and reusing them in ways that the Maya did not intend (M. Graham 1992:191). In addition, as mentioned earlier, ancient Maya warriors destroyed sculptures of other polities (see Houston 2004:276; Martin 2000b; M. Miller and O’Neil 2004; Sharer 2004:305–16; Stuart 1998b).

These transformations are part of the objects’ life histories or cultural biographies, even when they take place in a different culture, do not respect the object’s original form or meaning, or destroy them. Indeed, all reuses—however objectionable—must be acknowledged as parts of the objects’ long-term existence. Modern transformations of ancient sculptures, therefore, may be considered as part of a continuum with those in the ancient past. We may understand the transfer of these monuments to private collections and museums as other moments of interaction, in which new interpretive communities engage with and newly perceive the objects.

At the same time, the episodes of looting, fragmentation, and displacement clearly produced significant ruptures in the material and conceptual makeup of these things

and altered their physical forms and contexts in a manner that was categorically different from the interactions in the ancient past. I concede that my analyses are colored by my judgment of the morality and ethics of looting practices. But if I am to judge, and if I am disturbed by the destruction of these objects, I ask if twentieth-century fragmentation by looters is any different from ninth-century fragmentation by Yaxchilán warriors, as happened with Piedras Negras Stelae 12 and 15, Panel 3, and Throne 1. In a way, the answer is no. Yet I am fascinated by the acts of ninth-century Yaxchilán warriors but outraged by the acts of twentieth-century looters. Nevertheless, both groups destroyed the sculptures, and both committed acts of violence.

In these acts of destruction, both groups reified the power these objects have over people. Looters and their accomplices took great risks in extracting these things, collectors paid exorbitant amounts of money to purchase them, and people such as Ian Graham and his companions risked their lives to document and protect them. All of these actions, regardless of their motivation, constitute intense engagements with things.

But still unaddressed is the question about the state of these objects once they were fragmented and displaced in the twentieth century. If all of these transformations are part of a continuum of use and reuse, can we say that any of them qualitatively change the object? What happens to these monuments when they are divorced from their original contexts? What happens when they enter modern institutions such as museum galleries?

A number of authors have commented on the transformations that take place when religious objects are reconceptualized as art or placed in museums. Alfred Gell (1998:97), for example, writes that the reclassification of “idols” as art neutralizes them. Another common argument is that objects “die” in museums. David Carrier, for example, cites a range of theorists from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries who have claimed that objects in museums are dead (Carrier 2006:51–59). Moreover, museums’ encouragement of passive viewing and the flattening out of objects’ ancient and modern histories contribute to their apparent loss of life, spirit, and affective power.

But new interactions can and do take place with these objects, whether in museums or elsewhere, whether they are transformed into commodities, works of art, or objects of analysis. Regarding his approach to following objects through time and in different interpretive communities, Davis argues that “different ways of seeing animate the objects seen in new ways” (R. Davis 1997:9). Can interactions with Maya sculptures in private collections or museums animate these sculptures again? Perhaps, for although they may be “neutralized” or even “dead,” they still hold power and incite emotion and response, whether of admiration, fascination, curiosity, awe, respect, or disgust.

Furthermore, they still may bear or convey agency and meaning imbued in them by their makers and those who interacted with them from the moment of their creation and beyond. This includes the agency of patrons and sculptors in the making of the object, of worshipers making burning offerings in front of a monument, of ancient marauders or modern looters transforming the physical thing, and of modern scholars adding stories and interpretations about the object and its ancient communities. All of these engagements and social relations are folded into the life

history and agency of these things and may inhere both in their materiality and in the stories that accrue around them.

In the end, I support continued efforts to stop looting, assist countries with repatriation claims when desired, and negotiate new agreements, collaborations, and exchange of objects as loans among countries. Whether the objects from Piedras Negras and elsewhere stay in their current locations in museums or are repatriated to their home countries, I advocate for the telling of their stories and for considering all interactions and transformations as essential parts of these objects' life histories. Indeed, in addition to considering how people interacted with them in the ancient past, we need to continue to study the systems by which they were looted, as well.

These practices are part of the social, cultural, economic, and intellectual histories of Guatemala, the United States, and other countries. The stories, social systems, international interactions, and ways of knowing and seeing are worthy of study on their own terms. For example, future studies could examine the different techniques that looters used to destroy these monuments. Alternatively, they could explore the social, cultural, and economic composition and implications of the looting, distribution, and acquisition networks in Guatemala and Mexico, as well as in the United States, Asia, and Europe.⁵¹

By studying those systems and ways of seeing and knowing, we may shed light on the histories of both the objects and the people who engaged with them. But through such study, we also may learn about our present, both regarding how the very same antiquities trade continues to destroy the world's cultural heritage and how antiquities trade networks—both in the 1960s and today—are connected to narcotics trade networks that are currently paralyzing Mexico and sacrificing countless human lives (see also Crossley 1984; Dorfman 1998:29).

As part of the telling of these stories, these sculptures should be displayed, and the indices of their twentieth- and twenty-first-century treatment should not be obfuscated or downplayed. Of the Piedras Negras stelae that were looted and sold in the international art market, three—Stelae 3, 7, and 25—have been returned to Guatemala, though these are only fragments of the original monuments, and they are in storage at the MUNAE and currently not on display. In contrast, the MUNAE does display monuments from El Zotz, Naranjo, and elsewhere that were looted but later repatriated.

The rest of the Piedras Negras monuments are in museums, art galleries, and private collections. Yet even in the museums, only two (Stelae 5 and 11) are currently on public exhibition. Others are relegated to basements, whether because the museums are under renovation or have no room to display the monuments or because the monuments are fragmented or in poor condition.⁵² In fact, Alan Shestack, director of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts from 1985 to 1987, expressed embarrassment over the museum's ownership of the "brutalized" Piedras Negras Stela 2.⁵³ He wrote, "The object was obviously mutilated in the process of being removed from its original site. It is in wretched condition now, hardly enjoyable to look at; I can hardly imagine why my predecessors here wanted it, given its state at the time. And there it sits. I think if the Guatemalan government wanted it back, I would be only too happy to give it back. But I cannot imagine why they would, in fact, want it now (Shestack [1989] 1999:95)." The stela remains in the Minneapolis collection but currently is not exhibited.

The opportunities to interact with these sculptures are thereby being denied to all but a few people. These objects should be displayed again, along with photographs of their original forms and stories of the ancient and modern life histories of the physical things, such that neither these monuments nor the human interactions with them, whether from the eighth century or the twentieth century, are lost. Furthermore, their display will allow people to see and interact with them and animate them in new ways.

Finally, although these objects have been transformed, we may continue to analyze them and try to understand why the ancient Maya made them, how they perceived them, and how they used them. For in trying to recreate the lived experiences of people in relation to sculptures and capture a glimpse into ancient intentions and experiences of these objects, however elusive these endeavors may be, we may bring these objects to life in new ways. Moreover, by revealing and acknowledging the fundamental power they held more than a millennium ago and allowing our own ways of seeing and knowing to be expanded by the histories of interactions with these sculptures, the increased knowledge of ancient experiences may affect our own.

In *Time and the Highland Maya*, Barbara Tedlock describes the K'iche' Maya conceptualization of the passage of time as an "accumulation" or "piling on" of time analogous to the accumulation of duties and titles by religious and political leaders in Momostenango, Guatemala, which "do not so much change as accumulate" (Tedlock [1982] 1993:202). In an analogous fashion, the life histories of the Piedras Negras monuments are piled onto them as they accrue meaning, accumulate histories, and bear indices of rites and relations enacted at the moment of their creation and afterward. These life histories inhere within and accrue around the objects' very materiality and the memory of those life histories, with each interaction and story piling on and affecting the object, which itself becomes saturated with memory.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. For example, the Maya polity with the Snake-head emblem glyph was at Calakmul in the Late Classic, but the kingdom was located elsewhere in the Early Classic, perhaps at Dzibanché (Martin 2000a, 2005; Martin and Grube 2008:101–106; Velásquez 2004).
2. The Acropolis is an elevated area on the northwest edge of the site center. Its many buildings included temples and residential structures as well as the royal throne room, and it held the polity's Late Classic palace (Houston 2004; Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 1998:46–47).
3. Houston and collaborators decipher the name as Yat Ahk (Houston et al. 2001:70).
4. Stephen Houston, Héctor Escobedo, and David Webster (2008) decipher the glyphic collocation of **ye-te-k'a(ba)-IL** on an incised shell from Piedras Negras Burial 5 as *y-et-k'aba'-il*, the word for namesake.
5. Linton Satterthwaite ([1943] 2005d:181) also notes thick limestone strata at the tops of Hills L and S (on the eastern edge of the site core) that the Maya may have quarried. William S. Godfrey (1940:24) suggests there also were quarries near the Acropolis, specifically in a canyon between Structures J-4 and K-5.
6. Regarding sculptors and their signatures at Piedras Negras, see also John Montgomery's 1995 master's thesis.
7. K'uhul tuun appears on Copán Stelae A and C and Pusilhá Stela D, to name just a few (Newsome 2001:157; Stuart 1996:154; Wanyerka 2003:104–109).
8. There are cases at Yaxchilán in which evidence indicates that a stated dedication date does not align with the year the monument was carved, but these are rare and likely were responses to crisis. We can recognize that they were carved later than their dedicatory dates because of anachronisms in text and image (P. Mathews 1988:135, 155; Noble Bardsley 1994; O'Neil 2005:157–63, 174–82; Proskouriakoff 1963:164; Tate 1992:125, 133, 173).
9. Stelae 42 and 44 could have been painted, although there are no traces of pigment on them.
10. Stuart (2007c) has deciphered the name of this supernatural bird as Muut Itzamnaaj. See Clancy (2009:28–32) regarding her interpretation of these images.
11. Clancy (2009:30) suggests the niche is marked as a place of rebirth for the ruler's accession. While this interpretation is intriguing, the niche monuments were dedicated for the first period-ending after accession and not the accession itself (see Stuart 2005:89).
12. Clancy (2009:109–10) cites K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's Stela 2 as the first of the "scattering" type, but I would place Itzam K'an Ahk I's Stelae 32 and 34 in this category as well.

13. Panel 2 was 1.29 meters long and 55 centimeters high, Panel 3 was 1.26 meters long and 62 centimeters high, and Panel 15 was 1.44 meters long and 1.28 meters high (Houston, Escobedo, Child, et al. 2000:103; Morley 1937–38, 3:93, 221).
14. Houston, Claudia Brittenham, Cassandra Mesick, Alexandre Tokovinine, and Christina Warinner (2009:69–71) distinguish between “natural color” and “symbolic color” (which I here call “descriptive” and “expressive”) in Classic period Maya color use. They also observe that Maya colors may be polyvalent, which contributes to their symbolic power. They cite, for example, the color red and its symbolism of blood, east, rising sun, day, and great (Houston et al. 2009:71).
15. See Pierre Colas (2003) regarding the decipherment of k’inich and its varying uses in rulers’ names. Colas argues that when k’inich is used before the rest of the name and is not connected grammatically to the name, as in K’inich Yo’nal Ahk, it serves as an attribute and characterizes the ruler as being “invested with the entire aspect of the sun” (Colas 2003:274). Like rulers at other sites, Piedras Negras rulers took this title at accession, although Colas observes that it was used for Yo’nal Ahk II only at Piedras Negras; foreign references name him just Yo’nal Ahk (Colas 2003:275, 277). See also Houston and Stuart (1996).
16. For examples of other ways that Maya rulers portrayed themselves as solar manifestations or otherwise likened themselves to the sun, see Houston and Cummins (2004:365), O’Neil and Taube (2012), Taube (2003:409–13), and Tate (1991).
17. Houston and Stuart (1992:591–92) estimate that literacy rates were likely less than that of the ancient Mediterranean, for which there is a proposed rate of 10 to 15 percent.
18. According to Matthew Looper, the numerous censer fragments that archaeologists found ground into the surface of the Quiriguá plaza are among the evidence for gatherings of people and ceremonial practice in that plaza (Looper 2001:128, citing Jones et al. 1983:10).

1. HISTORIES OF INTERPRETATION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

1. Chicle is the gum from the sapodilla tree that is used to make rubber and chewing gum. For more about the chicle industry in the Americas, see Jennifer Mathews (2009).
2. John Lloyd Stephens had made the suggestion as early as 1859 that the ancient Maya monuments recorded history (Stephens [1859] 1949:125).
3. The Guatemalan declaration was made partially in response to the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments, adopted at the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments. This congress, which met in Athens in 1931, was concerned with preservation, protection, and proper conservation of historic sites around the world. Among other recommendations, the charter urged all countries to publish inventories of their ancient monuments. A copy of the Athens Charter is available online at www.icomos.org/athens_charter.html.
4. See Benjamin Keen (1971) and Adam Herring (1999:47) regarding earlier comparisons of Mesoamerican civilizations to Old World Classical civilizations.
5. Likewise, the photograph that Morley (1946, plate 70a) included of Throne 1 was of the reconstructed sculpture, with its cracks filled and its heads rebuilt, although the monument had been fragmented and strewn about the room where it had been installed.
6. Morley’s 1937–38 description of the text concentrated on deciphering as many glyphs as possible (primarily the calendrical glyphs). He also waxed poetic about the image, focusing on its content, “surpassing beauty,” and mastery of execution (Morley 1937–38, 3:220–29). He does

mention that it was “badly battered, perhaps intentionally,” but this is a passing reference, a short comment amid ten pages of text in which he focuses principally on what he could see of its original form and not on its damaged state or reasons for that damage.

7. Tate (1992:111) critiques Hartung’s study of Yaxchilán orientations and alignments for the same reasons, yet she comments that Hartung made useful observations of alignments at Piedras Negras. I contend that the proposed alignments at Piedras Negras should be subject to the same critiques as those at Yaxchilán.

2. SCULPTURAL BODIES AND SACRED MOVEMENT

1. K’inich Yo’näl Ahk II erected eight stelae on the J-1 platform in front of Structure J-4 during his reign (687–729 CE).
2. In her illustration of Stela 3’s front, Teufel (2004:319) drew a ceramic vessel resting on the throne. The presence of a vessel could have been another visual anchor, though it is unclear if this was carved on the monument.
3. The headdresses of the two depictions of Yax Nuun Ahiin differ, precluding an exact correlation, but the impression that two sides of one body are depicted is strong.
4. See R. Joyce (1996:174–82) regarding variations of placement and pairing of males and females depicted on Classic period Maya stelae, whether in single monuments or in pairs of monuments, and the implied idea of gender complementarity.
5. Tate has demonstrated that the content of the carvings on Late Classic Yaxchilán stelae is oriented toward either more secluded or more public spaces. The sides of stelae facing temples commonly portray rulers performing ceremonies such as scattering incense or blood (Tate 1991:103). The sides of stelae facing plazas and the river generally portray rulers wearing warrior garb, often with captives at their feet (Tate 1991:105–106). Tate (1991: 106–108) also observes a distinction in the textual content, for the texts on the temple-facing sides narrate accession anniversaries and period endings, whereas the texts on the river sides recount warfare events. Tate (1991:109) relates the difference to the uses of the buildings and plazas, suggesting that secluded building interiors were used for activities such as bloodletting, and public plazas were used for captive presentations and other performances.
6. See Clancy (2009:5, fig. 1.2) for her terminology regarding the presence of images on multiple sides of stelae. When there is only an image on the front, she calls the “compositional field” a “panel.” When the carving is on the front and back, she terms it “recto-verso.” Stelae with distinct images on the front and a side are “multi-panel.” A stela with an image that wraps around from the front to a side is “wraparound.”
7. Others have observed that the Stela 33 image is a profile view of the niche motif (e.g., Clancy 2009:48; Morley 1937–38, 3:48).
8. Clancy (2009:5) characterizes the difference between these stelae by stating that Stela 25 is in a stational mode and Stela 33 is in a narrative mode.
9. Yo’näl Ahk III’s Stela 16 has subsidiary figures on both sides who face the monument’s front. The front is eroded, but based on comparisons with Stelae 6 and 11, we can hypothesize that the front held an image of Yo’näl Ahk III.
10. The measurement of the carved portions of these stelae above the image’s ground line excludes the height of the stela butts. The plain butts were inserted into the ground and kept the monument upright. In order to determine the potential heights of the rulers’ faces, I measure

from the ground line of the carved image. Most of these monuments have been destroyed, and I am relying on Maler and Morley's measurements that at times are unclear. Therefore, this endeavor has a high margin of error. Nevertheless, this method can be useful in comparing the monuments' sizes and positions and the relation of hypothetical viewers to them. For example, Maler recorded the height of the carving on Stela 26, now destroyed, as about 2.48 meters (Maler 1901:68). Extrapolating from this measurement, one can determine that the center of the ruler's face was about 1.5 meters from the ground line of the carved image and thus from the ground level where a viewer potentially could stand. For those stelae installed on a stela platform, we have to add the height of the platform.

11. This distance is based on measurements from Satterthwaite ([1944] 2005e:194, fig.7.15).
12. The height of the carved portion of Stela 32 was 2.05 meters and that of Stelae 33 and 35 was 2.15 meters (Maler 1901:72–73). The ruler's eye level was about 1.25 to 1.4 meters above the given ground line for these three stelae.
13. The height of the carved portion of Stela 6 is 2.28 meters (Maler 1901:49). With the stela installed on the 40-centimeter high platform, the ruler's face was about 1.75 meters above the ground level of the J-1 terrace floor.
14. The height of the carving on Stela 4 was about 3.05 meters (Maler 1901:48). The height of the carved portion of Stela 8, above the image's ground line, was about 3.2 meters (Stuart and Graham 2003:43).
15. The carving on Stela 11 was 3.04 meters tall (Stuart and Graham 2003:56). Stela 9 was slightly smaller. The height of its carving was 2.85 meters (Morley 1937–38, 3:193; Teufel 2004:352). It was set on a platform that added 10 centimeters to its height (Satterthwaite [1943] 2005d:180).
16. SeeLooper (2009:155) regarding the way Maya buildings and images carved or painted on them work to assimilate people into the action performed in the images.
17. Stela 8 was not on the low platform on which the rest of K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II's stelae were installed but was set directly into the J-1 terrace (Satterthwaite [1943] 2005d:180).
18. We do not know exactly where Panel 3 was installed, but it is certain it was either on the upper portion of the O-13 pyramid or in or on the shrine.
19. There were some variations in reading patterns. In particular, the Stela 12 reading order begins on the right side and continues to the left. However, there is no explicit grammatical link between them, and the texts may function independently. For Stela 23, the texts on each side begin with Initial Series dates. However, the last glyph of the text on the monument's front suggests that the texts on the sides are actually continuous, for the front text ends with a distance number, which indicates that the narrative continues on the right side. Stela 7 also varies from the pattern because the text goes down the monument's left side and resumes at the top of the monument, arching over the top and down the right side. The text at the top is not visible to a person on the ground and thus cannot be followed unless the reader is on a scaffold or other platform. Still, the text effectively wraps the monument in an upright circle. Contrary to inspiring circumambulation, the wrapping of the text around the monument may have been crucial to its period ending commemorative role.
20. Elsewhere, the Classic period Maya celebrated this period ending with grand commissions. Palenque's Cross Group, consisting of three temples with lengthy texts covering extensive periods of time and recounting the birth of deities in relation to the acts of Palenque rulers, was dedicated on 9.13.0.0.0 (Josserand 1991).

21. Similarly, Newsome (2001:205–20) has hypothesized that the arrangement of Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil's stelae in Copán's Great Plaza also related to rites of cosmogenesis. She describes the stelae as analogous to the trees that were erected at the time of creation, as described in myths in the *Chilam Balam of Chumayel* and elsewhere. She further proposes that these monuments were visited in ritual circuits that formed a crisscross pattern among the stelae.
22. Taube cites Thompson's (1934:214) suggestion that the trees and gods for the south and north (26c and 28c) must have been transposed, for "nowhere in the Dresden is there a clockwise passage of directions," but he disagrees with Thompson's suggestion of an error, saying that "there must have been some reason" for this change (Taube 1988b:221–22). Clockwise circular format can still be a sacred movement through space. We see a clockwise format in the eighth-century arrangement of reset lintels in Yaxchilán Structure 12 (O'Neil 2011).
23. In the closing of the rite, the spirits are called and returned in clockwise order, beginning in the east and proceeding to the south, west, north, and center (Hanks 1990:337).

3. SCULPTURAL DIALOGUES ACROSS TIME AND SPACE

1. Also associated with these buildings were plain or completely eroded stelae, including Stelae 24 and 27 in front of Structures R-9 and R-10, and Stelae 42 and 44 on Structure R-3's summit. Another plain or completely eroded stela is Stela 41, in front of Structure R-16. Satterthwaite ([1933] 2005a:21) described Structure R-16 as "the largest free-standing pyramid of the city." In addition, the plain Stela 28 was found in front of Structure R-1, which was just outside the South Group court's perimeter. Escobedo and Zamora (2001a:111) found a cache beneath Stela 28.
2. Structure R-5, a thirteen-meter tall pyramid, was the only South Group pyramid with a vaulted superstructure (Escobedo and Zamora 1999:217; Satterthwaite [1933] 2005a:19).
3. Piedras Negras Archaeological Project archaeologists tried to excavate into R-5 in hopes of finding his tomb but were not successful because the structure's loose fill became dangerous for digging (Escobedo and Zamora 2001b:205).
4. William Coe (1967:55) used the term "range-type buildings" for low-lying, multi-roomed buildings at Tikal. These are to be distinguished from temples or pyramidal structures. The term "range structure" is more frequently used in the literature. Hattula Moholy-Nagy (2003:7) further explains that the "range structure" designation is for "buildings with a floor plan of rooms arranged side by side."
5. Stela 7's text includes a date of 9.15.0.0.0, but this was a future date; Ruler 3 did not live to see this day (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008).
6. Panel 15 was discovered in 2000 by archaeologists of the PNAP, led by Houston and Escobedo. It had slid down the pyramid's front but probably had been installed in the superstructure or on a masonry altar built into the stairway (Houston 1999; Houston and Escobedo 2001).
7. A comparable text on the right side of Stela 1 includes the recounting of a *puluuy utz'itil* ancestral fire ceremony that K'inich Yo'nal Ahk II performed for his father (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008).
8. Lady K'atun Ajaw may have appeared on other stela backs, though those surfaces are eroded.
9. Escobedo and Zamora (2001d:449) note that Structure O-12 had a long construction and occupation sequence, with ceramics from the Preclassic to the Early Classic (Nabá).

10. Ruler 5 dedicated his other stela, Stela 16, on 9.16.15.0.0 (15 February 766 CE). Installed in front of Structure O-13 on its central axis in a line of eroded stelae, Stela 16 fell sculpted front up. The figural image on the front is mostly destroyed, though the carvings of subsidiary figures on the sides, similar to those on Stela 11, did survive. Yo'nal Ahk III ruled for nine years. There is no extant information of the circumstances of the end of his rule, his death, or the location of his burial.
11. Stela 12 has eight sculptors' signatures; one—Sculptor 32—appears also on Stela 15 (Houston, Escobedo, and Webster 2008, appendix).
12. Morley (1937–38, 3:271) was unsure of the exact location of Stela 14. It was found in the plaza, but Morley believed it had fallen from the building; he stated that it was “probably” on the lower terrace in front of the southeast end of Structure O-13 (1937–38, 3:271). Extrapolating from the locations of other rulers' niche stelae on terraces, I conjecture that Morley's suggestion was correct, and that Stela 14 was located on a terrace.

4. STRUCTURE O-13 AND THE MATERIALITY OF MEMORY

1. Panel 1 survives only as a fragment. Another monument found on Structure O-13 was Miscellaneous Sculptured Stone 16, but its archaeological context was not recorded; it is unclear if it was installed on the building or buried inside it.
2. Martin and Grube (2008:149) and M. Miller and Martin (2004:130) date Panel 3 to 795 CE, although there is no evidence that it was made any later than the text's 782 CE terminal date. Nevertheless, because K'inich Yat Ahk II had acceded only one year before 782, it is probable that Panel 3 was made somewhat later.
3. The date of the Yaxchilán accession is unclear, because the Calendar Round date, 2 Kawak 2 Muwan, is not tied into the Long Count in the panel's text. Houston and Stuart (2001:71) suggest 9.16.6.9.16 (16 October 757 CE), but Martin and Grube (2008:127) state that the date has no secure anchor in the Long Count.
4. Schele and Miller (1986:149) note that the distance number is in error and should be 7.10.1.16 instead of 7.5.1.16, the number that is written.
5. The trend of using Teotihuacan war motifs continued through the reigns of Yo'nal Ahk II and Itzam K'an Ahk II, although on Itzam K'an Ahk II's Stela 40, from 746 CE, the figure dressed in the Teotihuacan war-serpent headdress is an ancestor in a tomb. There, the reference may be more to Piedras Negras' own ancestors and their depictions than to Teotihuacan.
6. Panel 2 was 1.29 meters long by 55 centimeters high, and Panel 3 was 1.26 meters long and 62 centimeters high (Morley 1937–38, 3:93, 221).
7. Stuart (2007b) and Clancy (2009:23) have suggested the captive presentation may be a symbolic display of regional dominance instead of a portrayal of actual historical captures, particularly because the three named persons are dressed, because the Lakamtuun ruler is later named on Yaxchilán Lintel 35, and because Knot-eye Jaguar appears again at Yaxchilán after the date of this capture. However, I agree with Houston, Escobedo, and Webster (2008) that this image is in line with other depictions of captures that were records of historical events. The reappearance of two of the three captives on Panel 12 in later texts does not mean they were not captured, for they could have been returned to their home polities.
8. Panel 12 measures 1.20 meters long and 55 centimeters high.
9. Proskouriakoff (n.d., 9) entertained the possibility that the MSS 1 altar either was cached or

simply used as a fill stone in the floor during the construction of O-13-1st. However, given the many offerings filling the floor, all signs point to this stone as having been cached.

10. In a 1946 article, Satterthwaite (1946:21) wrote that the floors around some column altars were not burned. Because of this, he suggested that the Maya placed censers around the column altars, and the smoke from the burning in the censers blackened the altars but not the floors. Unfortunately, he does not specify which altars or buildings have blackened altars but not blackened floors. Regardless, Mason recorded burning on the floor of K-5-3. There may have been variation in Classic Maya use of these altars.
11. Column altars were also found in the superstructures of Structures J-29, R-16, O-16, O-7 (which had twenty-four), and C-13 (W. Coe 1959:89, 92–98; Jackson 2005:574–75; Mason 2005:21–22; Satterthwaite [1944] 2005e:202; [1952] 2005f:332–35).
12. MSS 1's Long Count date is fragmentary, with only 9.10.6 surviving. Morley suggested 9.10.6.5.9, Itz'am K'an Ahk I's accession date, as a reconstruction, but Thompson (1944:81) noted that the central element of the Initial Series Introductory Glyph did not match the corresponding month of Zip but corresponded to Kayab. His alternative was 9.10.6.2.1.

CONCLUSION

1. The reuse of sculptures across a range of Maya sites is the topic of my book manuscript, "The Lives of Ancient Maya Sculptures" (O'Neil, n.d.).
2. As stated earlier in this book, excavators did not locate a tomb in Structure R-5, but it is most probable that it was K'inich Yo'nal Ahk I's funerary pyramid.

EPILOGUE

1. Piedras Negras Panel 1 is Peabody Museum number 00-36-20/C2741, and Panel 2 is number 00-36-20/C2740.
2. The 1947 date for return of the sculptures is from www.famsi.org/research/piedras_negras/u_penn/index.htm. Stela 14 is Penn Museum Object #L-16-382.
3. Photographs of the lift system are in the Penn Museum archives, Images #175936 and #175937.
4. Barbara Isenberg (1976) cites the \$1,800 amount, whereas Graham (2010:436) says it was reportedly sold for \$3,000. Either way, the price increased dramatically once the stela was in the United States.
5. See Graham (2010:436–38) for a detailed description of the journey of Machaquilá Stela 2, including its concealment in a cargo of shrimp and its movement through the hands of various purchasers. Graham also recounts how the FBI built the case against Hollinshead.
6. Some authors have defended the actions of those who loot antiquities in Central and South America under the claim that they are undertaking "subsistence digging." According to Matsuda (1998:91), for example, farmers in Central America take objects out of the ground as a "viable socioeconomic alternative to starvation and a preferred way to rebuild working capital." Matsuda contends that these people—and not modern nation states—may be considered the heirs to the cultural resources of their regions, although they are the ones most exploited in the antiquities trade (Matsuda 1998:94).
7. Photographs from circa 1975 from the Jeffrey Miller and Allison Krebs Photographic Catalogue of Maya Monuments at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of the Arts of Africa,

- Oceania, and the Americas, Visual Resource Archive, show fragments of Stela 2 that were left at the site. They include the top of Stela 2 (J. Miller and Krebs, n.d., negative #75.566–567) and fragments of its text (J. Miller and Krebs, n.d., negative #75.548, 550, 551, 562–65).
8. The MIA accession number for Piedras Negras Stela 2 is 66.10.
 9. The texts and other parts of these monuments apparently were jettisoned. The face of Stela 7 may have been recarved.
 10. Looters also started to fragment Stela 1 by cutting into the glyphs on the upper right side of the back but abandoned their efforts and left the monument in situ and relatively intact (Stuart and Graham 2003:15).
 11. Photographs by Jeffrey Miller and Allison Krebs show Stela 8 on site circa 1975 after it had been cut (J. Miller and Krebs, n.d., negative #75.344, 353, 356, 363, 412, 460). Photographs of the monument fragments by Ian Graham are in the CMHI archives, Peabody Museum, Harvard University (CMHI/Peabody Museum #2004.15.1699.1, 2004.15.1933.2).
 12. At one time, the late Roberto Ardon, a Los Angeles art dealer, had this captive, but it may now be in a collection in the United States or Europe (Donald Hales, personal communication, 2011).
 13. This captive may have been sold to an unidentified collector in the United States (Donald Hales, personal communication, 2011).
 14. Unpublished documentation by Ian Graham. CMHI archives, Peabody Museum, Harvard University.
 15. A photograph from circa 1997 to 2005 by Stephen Houston shows the lower portion of Stela 35 on site after fragmentation. Previous reports that the bottom of Stela 35 had been lost in the river (e.g. Grube 1992b:498; Teufel 2004:444) are incorrect.
 16. The loss of the throne's head ornament from Stela 10 is apparent in a photograph by J. Miller and Krebs from circa 1975 (J. Miller and Krebs, n.d., negative #75.592).
 17. Information about conservation treatment is from the MIA files.
 18. Looters destroyed Stela 3 sometime after March 1956, when Jorge Luján Muñoz (1966:19) saw it on site. Photographs by J. Miller and Krebs from circa 1975 and other photographs by Graham show pieces of the Stela 3 queen's body on site (J. Miller and Krebs, n.d., negative #75.535–537). Photographs of the monument fragments by Ian Graham are in the CMHI archives, Peabody Museum, Harvard University (Peabody Museum #2004.15.1699.1, 2004.15.1933.2).
 19. Photographs by J. Miller and Krebs show other fragments of Stela 3 on site circa 1975. These include fragments of the text from the back at locations C1–C2, D1–D2, E2 (J. Miller and Krebs, n.d., negative #75.509, 511), a fragment with text from the back at location A10 and the top edge of throne (J. Miller and Krebs, n.d., negative #75.528), a fragment of the back with the headdress of queen and text at locations F8, F9, F10 (J. Miller and Krebs, n.d., negative #75.525), a fragment of the back with text from locations F5, F6, F7 (J. Miller and Krebs, n.d., negative #75.521), and a fragment of the text from the stela's left side (J. Miller and Krebs, n.d., negative #75.527, 529, 530).
 20. The Brooklyn Museum's accession numbers for the Stela 3 fragments were 64.162 a–j. Information regarding the seller comes from a letter from Thomas S. Buechner, Brooklyn Museum, to Thomas F. Killoran, Department of State, dated 29 August 1966. Brooklyn Museum Archives. Source: Records of the Office of the Director (T. S. Buechner, 1960–71). Departments:

Primitive Art [02] (05/1966–10/1968). Information regarding seller and price obtained from accession sheet and voucher from the Brooklyn Museum Registrar's Office. Source: 1970 De-accession File/Primitive Art: Purchase returned to Guatemalan Government.

21. The Stela 3 fragments comprised a portion of the text from the stela's back that narrated events in the life of Lady K'atun Ajaw, discussed in chapter 2. Text fragments from other monuments were sold as well. For example, a New York art dealer sold at least two text fragments from Stela 29 to a private collector in Tokyo, Japan (Donald Hales, personal communication, 2010; Mayer 1995:14, plate 39).
22. The Stela 3 fragments were in Brooklyn, the top of Stela 7 was in Mexico, and a section of Stela 25 was in Paris, but these were returned to Guatemala's MUNAE (Alfonzo 1986:202; L. Luján Muñoz 1969:7; 1985:461, 483; Mayer 1984:6; 1986; Stuart and Graham 2003:40). They are currently in storage at the MUNAE.
23. Comparisons of the Maler photograph of Stela 3 with a photograph of the depicted vessel after looting show that the top of the vessel was recarved. A photograph of the fragment with the recarved vessel is in the archives of the CMHI in the Peabody Museum, Harvard University (CMHI/ Peabody Museum negative #7145/3).
24. The inventory number for the upper half of Stela 35 in the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum is #60333 or Sammlung Ludwig #SL/XXXIII (Teufel 2004:444).
25. The top portion of Stela 11 is accession number 68-51 at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. Stela 11's lower portion may be in Switzerland (Stuart and Graham 2003:56). Photographs by J. Miller and Krebs from circa 1975 show the base of Stela 11 in situ after the rest was looted (J. Miller and Krebs, n.d., negative #75.572).
26. The bottom portion of Stela 5 was left at the site (Stuart and Graham 2003:32). Photographs by J. Miller and Krebs from circa 1975 show the lower portion of Stela 5's front, with the *witz* (mountain) and water band design, which the looters left at the site (J. Miller and Krebs, n.d., negative #75.538).
27. The 1947 legislation was Decree Number 425, of 19 March 1947, the "Ley sobre protección y conservación de los monumentos, objetos arqueológicos, históricos y típicos." Article 3 of the decree prohibited the destruction, repair, restoration, and change of location of monuments and archaeological, historic, and artistic objects without the express authorization of the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Guatemala. Article 4 prohibited the exportation of the same, except in cases referred to in the law (such as designated loans). A copy of this law is available on the International Foundation for Art Research website, at www.ifar.org/icp_legislation.php?docid=1232462587.
28. Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (UNESCO 1970) of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Document accessed online at <http://portal.unesco.org>. A list of countries and their dates of acceptance and ratification of the treaty can be accessed online at <http://portal.unesco.org/la/convention.asp?KO=13039&language=E>.
29. See Coggins (1998:53–54) and Graham (2010:441) regarding the active opposition to the convention by various parties in the United States.
30. The text of the U.S. Legislation, U.S. Code, Title 19, Customs Duties, Chapter 11, et seq. 2091–2095, or "Regulation of Importation of Pre-Columbian Monumental or Architectural Sculpture or Murals, Public Law No. 92-587, 19 U.S.C. §§ 2091ff. (1972)," is reprinted in Merryman, Elsen, and Urice (2007:320–22).

31. "Import Restrictions Imposed on Archaeological Artifacts from Guatemala," Department of the Treasury, U.S. Customs Service, 19 CFR Part 12 [T. D. 91-34], accessed online at <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/E-USIA/education/culprop/gt91fr01.html>.
32. The 2008 "Report of the AAMD Task Force on the Acquisition of Archaeological Materials and Ancient Art," issued by the Association of Art Museum Directors, includes new guidelines for museum acquisitions of ancient art, including recommendations for more thorough researching of objects' histories and documentation of the legality of their exportation or importation. The report also recommends that museums follow the 1970 date of the UNESCO convention in determining whether to acquire ancient artifacts. This report, along with its accompanying press release from 4 June 2008, is available at www.aamd.org/papers/.
33. Another looted Piedras Negras monument that was returned to Guatemala in the 1960s was one of the Altar 2 supports, which has a carved hieroglyphic text. It was returned to Guatemala's MUNAE from a Copenhagen museum (Coggins 1969:96; 1970:20; Teufel 2004:537).
34. The letters are available for study in the Brooklyn Museum's archives.
35. Letter from John C. Eddison, Acting Director, Office of Central American Affairs, Department of State, Washington, to Dr. Thomas S. Buechner, Director, Brooklyn Museum, dated 11 May 1966. Brooklyn Museum Archives. Source: Records of the Office of the Director (T. S. Buechner, 1960–71). Departments: Primitive Art [02] (05/1966–10/1968).
36. "Aide-Memoire: Legal Bases for Recovery of the Steles." Brooklyn Museum Archives. Source: Records of the Office of the Director (T. S. Buechner, 1960–71). Departments: Primitive Art [02] (05/1966–10/1968).
37. Letter from Thomas S. Buechner, Brooklyn Museum, to Thomas F. Killoran, Department of State, dated 29 August 1966. Brooklyn Museum Archives. Source: Records of the Office of the Director (T. S. Buechner, 1960–71). Departments: Primitive Art [02] (05/1966–10/1968).
38. Letter from Davidson, Dawson and Clark, Counsellors at Law, to Thomas F. Killoran, Chief of Guatemalan Affairs, Department of State, dated 17 February 1967. Brooklyn Museum Archives. Source: Records of the Office of the Director (T. S. Buechner, 1960–71). Departments: Primitive Art [02] (05/1966–10/1968).
39. Letter from Mrs. Dudley T. Easby, Jr., Acting Curator, Brooklyn Museum, to Sr. Dr. Carlos Samayoa Chinchilla, Director, Instituto de Antropología e Historia de Guatemala, dated 15 February 1967. Brooklyn Museum Archives. Source: Records of the Office of the Director (T. S. Buechner, 1960–71). Departments: Primitive Art [02] (05/1966–10/1968).
40. Letter from Carlos Samayoa Chinchilla, Director, Instituto de Antropología e Historia de Guatemala, to Mrs. Dudley T. Easby, Jr., Acting Curator, Brooklyn Museum, dated 8 March 1967. Brooklyn Museum Archives. Source: Records of the Office of the Director (T. S. Buechner, 1960–71). Departments: Primitive Art [02] (05/1966–10/1968).
41. Letter from Mrs. Dudley T. Easby, Jr., Acting Curator, Brooklyn Museum, to Sr. Dr. Carlos Samayoa Chinchilla, Director, Instituto de Antropología e Historia de Guatemala, dated 24 March 1967. Brooklyn Museum Archives. Source: Records of the Office of the Director (T. S. Buechner, 1960–71). Departments: Primitive Art [02] (05/1966–10/1968).
42. This quotation is from a letter to the director of the Brooklyn Museum from Prof. Dr. Otto Zerries, General Secretary of the 38th International Congress of Americanists, dated 9 October 1968. Brooklyn Museum Archives. Source: Records of the Office of the Director (T. S. Buechner, 1960–71). Departments: Primitive Art [02] (05/1966–10/1968). Dr. Zerries enclosed a copy of the resolution with this letter.

43. This quotation is from the document “38th International Congress of Americanists resolution, adopted on August 18, 1968.” Brooklyn Museum Archives. Source: Records of the Office of the Director (T. S. Buechner, 1960–71). Departments: Primitive Art [02] (05/1966–10/1968).
44. Letter from Thomas S. Buechner, Director of the Brooklyn Museum, to Prof. Dr. Otto Zerries, General Secretary of the 38th International Congress of Americanists, dated 24 October 1968. Brooklyn Museum Archives. Source: Records of the Office of the Director (T. S. Buechner, 1960–71). Departments: Primitive Art [02] (05/1966–10/1968).
45. Letter from Covington Hardee of Hardee Barovik Konecky and Gaines to Mr. Duncan F. Cameron, dated 7 February 1972. Brooklyn Museum Archives. Source: Records of the Office of the Director (Duncan F. Cameron, 1971–73). Collections: Primitive Art [J.01.07] (06/1971–06/1972). After a series of negotiations, Rockefeller had agreed to return ownership of Stela 5 to Guatemala. Guatemala, in turn, consented to a loan of ninety-nine years, and Stela 5 today is on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Julie Jones, personal communication, 2010).
46. Letter from Robert Huber to Michael Kan. Brooklyn Museum Registrar’s Office. Source: 1970 Deaccession File/Primitive Art: Purchase returned to Guatemalan Government.
47. “Draft—Press Release,” on letterhead of the Embassy of Guatemala, Washington, D.C. Brooklyn Museum Archives. Source: Records of the Office of the Director (Duncan F. Cameron, 1971–73). Collections: Primitive Art [J.01.07] (06/1971–06/1972).
48. Memorandum dated 23 February 1972 from Michael Kan to Duncan Cameron. Brooklyn Museum Registrar’s Office. Source: 1970 Deaccession File/Primitive Art: Purchase returned to Guatemalan Government.
49. Because of the difficulty of protecting the many archaeological sites on a severely limited budget, one strategy in Guatemala has been to place original monuments in regional museums and install replicas of those monuments at the archaeological sites (Dobrzynski 1998).
50. This concept of “interpretive communities” comes from Richard Davis, who states that this model arises from a combination of “Igor Kopytoff’s biographical method with a notion of ‘interpretive communities,’ drawn from reader-response literary theory, particularly as formulated by Stanley Fish.” According to Davis, “these two approaches provide a theoretical skin light and flexible enough to accommodate the plurality of identities and modes of livelihood in the lives in Indian images” (R. Davis 1997:8). This notion provides the foundation for Davis’s book, *The Lives of Indian Images*, which looks at Indian objects in various centuries and contexts, where they are seen, experienced, and perceived in different ways. As Davis writes, “The lives of Indian images . . . are made and remade through their encounters and differing audiences, who reciprocally bring with them different ways of seeing and acting toward the images they encounter” (R. Davis 1997:263).
51. Michael Coe (1993:273) has discussed the potential of studying the pre-Columbian art market “as an economic system, divided into realms of production, distribution, and consumption.” His study focuses primarily on dealers and collectors and gives few details about the people who carried out the looting on the ground, perhaps because this information might be much more difficult to obtain.
52. The upper portion of Stela 35 is slated for future exhibition in a new building of the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum für Völkerkunde in Köln (Stefanie Teufel, personal communication, 2010).
53. Dates of his directorship were obtained from a National Gallery of Art press release, www.nga.gov/press/2008/042908.shtm.

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